WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN

JOHN W. POWELL

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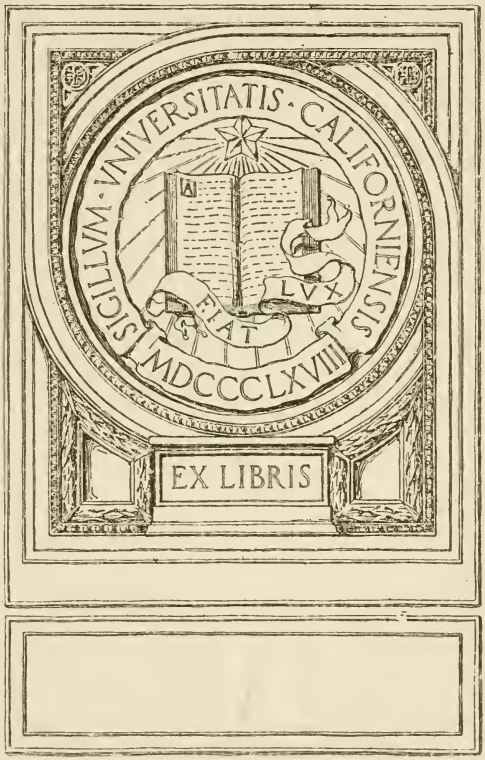

WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?

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WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?

A Book for the Times

BY

JOHN WALKER POWELL

AUTHOR OF "THE POETS' VISION OF MAN"
"THE SILENCES OF THE MASTER"
"HIM THAT OVERCOMETH"

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To

THE MEMORY OF

MY FATHER

A FRONTIER METHODIST PREACHER
OF THE OLD SCHOOL

AND OF

MY MOTHER

A SIMPLE CHRISTIAN

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INTRODUCTION

The war in Europe has caused great searchings of heart among thoughtful people the world over, who are asking if this is all we have to show for nineteen centuries of Christian teaching. Browning's lines come to mind, of the Christ

> "Whose sad face on the cross sees only this,
> After the passion of a thousand years."

President Eliot declares the Christian ethics a failure. John Galsworthy announces the death of mystical Christianity. A writer in the *Century* discusses the collapse of the church. The man in the street is asking, "Is the Christian ideal indeed practicable, or must the world go back in the end to the ancient doctrine that Might makes Right?"

The magazines in particular have been filled with discussions of this sort. It is true that as the first shock of the great catastrophe

has passed away and men have begun little by little to find themselves and to think more or less clearly, the problem is seen to be less acute than was at first supposed.

The great war is seen to be no isolated phenomenon, but merely the culmination of a long period of incubation.

The brutality of militarism appears on second thought to be not much worse than the brutality of industrialism.

Nevertheless the twentieth century has been rudely startled out of its complacency, and the world has been driven to look to the foundations of its thinking; to ask the meaning of its ultimate ideals, its fundamental principles.

While the discussion concerning the breakdown of Christianity was at its height, one of the popular magazines in a moment of unusual insight propounded the far-reaching query, "What is a Christian?" How far may one lag behind his Master in thought and practice without forfeiting his right to the title?

It is true the magazine in question lightheartedly desired an answer in five hundred words. Nevertheless the question struck at the root of the matter, and gave rise to some real thinking.

The answers received by the magazine revealed a surprising degree of popular spiritual insight. Coming from laymen rather than ministers, from men more than women, from the plain people, not the professional classes, and being fairly distributed over the whole country, they constitute perhaps the most comprehensive plebiscite on religious questions ever taken in America.

In the main these letters show that the common religious thought has progressed greatly in thirty years.

There was little mention of orthodoxy, little emphasis on details of doctrine, little confusion of thought over problems of scholarship. Neither the doctrine of Evolution nor the dust which filled the air a few years ago from the critical disintegration of the Scriptures seemed to worry the writers in the least.

This was not the complacent dogmatism which ignores the problem, but the steadfast conviction that the results of critical scholarship have not affected the main question. Evidently the world has moved since *Robert Elsmere* and *The Reign of Law.*

Christianity was defined in terms of the spirit rather than the letter, — even as regards the teachings of Jesus himself.

Moreover the distinction between a religion and a system of ethics was not lost sight of. The heart of the whole matter was found in personal loyalty to Jesus Christ, and the desire to embody his Spirit in the common life.

None the less, in spite of the high degree of insight displayed by these popular letters, the confusion of tongues which arose with the outbreak of the war, and no less the vagueness of outline more or less characteristic of the letters themselves, suggest the desirability of undertaking a more definite and comprehensive answer to the fundamental question — though it may require much more than five hundred words.

The papers which follow represent a series of discussions before a congregation of average folk, who seemed to find them enlightening.

It is needless to say that they do not pretend to be exhaustive. They do undertake, however, to be comprehensive.

They are the outgrowth of a fairly wide acquaintance with theological scholarship. There are many works of popular theology which deal with single phases of the theme, but the author knows of no other single book which attempts to survey the whole field for the general reader.

The aim has been to keep the matter within the range of the utmost brevity compatible with any degree of clearness, and to present the so-called modern standpoint in untechnical language with a view to helping the man in the street to clear up his thinking.

Any reader who cares to follow up the various phases of the subject in works of popular religious teaching is referred to the bibliography which is appended to this introduction. Not all the writers therein referred

to agree in all points with each other, nor with the viewpoint set forth in these pages. The author ventures to believe, however, that in the main the conclusions he has advocated will be generally recognized as essential Christianity.

If some would add thereto, few, he believes, would subtract from his conclusions, nor would any deny the name Christian to one who should embody in a fair and growing degree the spirit and ideals for which he contends.

It would not be difficult to answer the main question in a single sentence.

Jesus himself virtually defined a Christian as one who loves God with all his heart and his neighbor as himself.

John Wesley wrote a tract on "The Character of a Methodist," in which he adopted this definition, simply expanding it in terms of eighteenth century thought.

An aged and saintly minister of the Baptist church was once asked, "What is a Bap-

tist?" He replied, "A Baptist is one who believes that no form of worship, nor book, nor creed, nor priest, can come between any man and his Lord."

Such definitions are infinitely suggestive. Our difficulties begin when we ask what they mean.

If the Christian ideal could be clearly defined or perfectly realized, it would cease to interest us, for the simple reason that it would no longer be an ideal.

It is the greatness of Christianity that no age has been able to exhaust it; that each succeeding generation has found new light to break forth from it, has grown by it, and has found it in turn to grow in significance and power.

It is by this that it has challenged the ages, and has given men reason to regard it as the supreme and ultimate revelation of God.

Every age has had its own answer to the question, What is a Christian? The spiritual ideal of the twentieth century is quite

other than that of the seventeenth, which in turn differed from the viewpoint of the twelfth as that from the faith of the first century.

In the beginning it was enough that a man should follow Jesus.

After his death, two questions were asked by the apostles of those who would unite in their fellowship: Do you believe that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah of whom the prophets spake? and, Do you believe that God raised him from the dead?

There were many other things which were believed and taught by the apostolic church. To charge, with some recent writers, that Peter and Paul corrupted the simplicity of the primitive ideal by concessions to the demands of the world, by reason of their ambitious desire to transform the growing church into a world-power, is to beg the whole question of the essential character of the Christian teaching.

Nevertheless, it is evident that the theological interpretation of the Christian message

was second in order of time if not of importance.

The fundamental question concerned the Messiahship of Jesus as witnessed by his resurrection: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord (*i.e.*, Messiah or Christ), and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

It was regarded as desirable, — in some sense essential, — that the believer should receive the gift of the Holy Spirit; but those disciples of Apollos whom Paul found at Ephesus were accepted though they had "not so much as heard whether the Holy Spirit were given."

Social workers have often pointed to the community of goods practiced by the infant church at Jerusalem as an essential part of New Testament Christianity; but there is not a shred of evidence that such communism was observed anywhere outside of Jerusalem, whether at Rome, or Ephesus, or Corinth, or Antioch, or any other of the apostolic churches.

It was simply such communism as was practiced during the early months of the War in Brussels or Antwerp, where the common distress induced those who had means to share with their less fortunate brethren. Blockaded communities on the Dakota prairies in frontier days often resorted to the same method of meeting the situation.

When Ananias kept back part of the money which he and his wife received for the sale of their land, Peter rebuked him not for keeping the money, which the apostle declared was their own to do with as they saw fit, but for lying to the Holy Spirit.

Three hundred years later new conditions confronted the growing church, and new definitions of discipleship became necessary.

Various attempts had been made to interpret the faith in terms of the prevailing philosophy. Two questions in particular, both of them utterly foreign to both the language and the spirit of the New Testament, exercised men's minds.

The first was whether Christ's essential

nature was of the same or only of similar substance to that of God — whether one should say *homo-ousion* or *homoi-ousion*. The other was whether the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father alone, or from both the Father and the Son.

Both questions, it is manifest, were concerned with the central dignity and worth of the person of Christ. The present generation is concerned with the same issue, though the form of the discussion is greatly changed.

So great was the popular interest in these questions that we are told one could not ask for a fish at the market, or desire the attentions of the barber at the bath, without being met with a volley of theological reasoning.

Finally the church, in council at Nicea in 325, voted in effect that a Christian was one who accepted the statement of faith championed by Athanasius, namely, that the Son was of the same substance, *homo-ousion*, with the Father, and that the Holy Spirit proceeded from both the Father and the Son.

We have nothing to do at this point with the validity of these distinctions. It suffices merely to point out that the determining mark of a Christian in the fourth century differed widely from that of the apostolic age.

During the Middle Ages a Christian was one who was obedient to the church.

This involved the acceptance of the standards of belief, but the essential thing was obedience. King John of England was excommunicated, not for his crimes, nor because he was a heretic, but because he refused to abide by the judgment of the Pope.

With the coming of the Reformation the matter became yet more confused. The Roman Church still declined to recognize as Christian any who refused to obey her will. In the Protestant churches orthodoxy became once more the test, but there was much dispute as to the essentials of the orthodox faith.

This controversy still echoes in ecclesiastical circles, as witness the exclusion of Ed-

ward Everett Hale from the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America a few years ago.

Of course, in no age was the matter as simple as this brief outline of ecclesiastical history would indicate. Every age has had its standards of belief, its forms of ecclesiastical discipline, as well as its notions of Christian morals.

Two tendencies are noteworthy, however, particularly in the mediæval period.

The first is a growing danger that the demands of the moral life be obscured by emphasis on orthodoxy and conformity. Browning's bishop of St. Praxed's is fairly typical of the mediæval ecclesiastic.

A good example of the religious standards of the time is found in Benvenuto Cellini, as arrant an old reprobate as ever flourished in the world, a boastful swashbuckler who thought little of killing a man before breakfast, and whose moral standards in general were, to say the least, somewhat informal.

He records that after his unjust imprison-

ment by Pope Paul (another of the signs of the times), during which period he enjoyed the utmost spiritual consolation from his devotions, his sanctity was evidenced by an actual halo which surrounded his head, and which was plainly seen by his friends — after he had called their attention to it — though it was more clearly visible in the twilight, and flourished better in the moist atmosphere of Italy than in the drier climate of France!

The second tendency is that of a double moral standard, one for the ordinary man and another for the saint.

The Catholic Church has long distinguished between "precepts" and "counsels of perfection." The former are commands of Jesus which are absolute and binding upon every one. The latter are special virtues suggested by the New Testament, the practice of which is not obligatory, but which may be chosen by any one who desires to follow the higher path and to acquire special merit. Such are the practice of celibacy, or the monastic withdrawal from the world.

The Protestant churches reject this distinction, but the spirit of it persists to this day in the feeling that the ordinary citizen is not bound by as lofty a moral standard as the church member, who in turn is entitled to a certain measure of indulgence unbecoming in the minister.

Underneath these tendencies, however, and beneath the particular emphasis on special phases of the Christian teaching peculiar to each age, the world has never failed to recognize a way of thinking about life, a spirit and a moral ideal, which are essentially Christian. The question, What is a Christian? is concerned with the understanding of these deeper essentials.

What is the common denominator of the Christian centuries, of theological parties and religious sects?

What is there which in every age has underlain its particular type of religious teaching, and which has broadened and deepened in its influence upon mankind until it has overshadowed all other forms of religious specula-

tion, and to-day challenges humanity with its claim to universal supremacy?

If the Christian ideal must be set aside, if the Christian thought is too restricted to interpret reality as the modern world perceives it, just what precisely is the ideal, what is the philosophy which must be given up?

The question presents several distinct phases, none of which must be overlooked if our answer is to be completely satisfying.

There is a Christian way of thinking about things, of interpreting the world in which we live.

There is a Christian type of moral life, a Christian ethical ideal.

There is a Christian spirit; a form of emotional experience based on the acceptance of the Christian philosophy and the attempt to carry it out in practice.

There is a Christian type of society, a Christian program for the working out of human relations.

There is a Christian hope for the destiny of the individual and of the race.

Finally, there is a Christian organism in which the whole movement finds embodiment and expression.

To regard any single one of these elements as the whole of Christianity is to miss the significance of them all, for they bear a close relation with each other.

We may consent to regard certain of them as of more fundamental importance than the rest; we may regard as Christian any man who measurably conforms to any of them. But we have not answered the question with which we began in a way which can ultimately satisfy any one unless we take all of them into account.

All these phases of the Christian teaching and life have their root, not in pure speculation, not merely in certain forms of logical reasoning, but also in the history of more than nineteen centuries. Our judgment of them must rest, therefore, not alone on the logic of rigor and vigor, but on the logic of experience as well. Certain events and characters of which history is the judge

must enter into our understanding of the whole.

From this discussion it is evident what must be the standpoint from which our understanding of the whole matter begins, as well as the natural divisions into which the subject must fall.

That the outcome will not be final and conclusive goes without saying. Life is fragmentary, tentative, developing, in this as in every age. No man can see it as a whole. No man can exhaust the significance of its factors, no man can see the end from the beginning.

One can only declare the truth that is in him, in the hope that his vision may help his brother on the road to Enlightenment, and in the faith that in the fulness of time every lover of the truth shall have a part in that

"Far-off divine event
To which the whole creation moves."

JOHN WALKER POWELL.

MINNEAPOLIS,
August, Nineteen Fifteen.

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WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN

I

THE FAITH OF A CHRISTIAN

The present generation is impatient of theological distinctions. It would like to abolish all the creeds and unite the churches in one great religious trust.

There is a good deal of common sense in this reaction against the theological hair-splitting of former times. We refuse to believe that a man's opinions on the minute details of history or metaphysics are sufficient either to admit or to exclude him from the kingdom of grace and glory.

Fifty years ago the orthodox Christian was quite convinced that no Unitarian could be saved. There are not wanting many to-day who have some doubt regarding the Christian Scientist.

A sounder instinct gleams through the reply of Father Taylor, the Boston patriarch and friend of Emerson, to some of his Methodist brethren who inquired if he thought the gentle Concord philosopher had been saved. "All I know," was the tart response, "is that if he has gone to Hell, he'll change the climate."

John Wesley anticipated the modern point of view when he declared: "I am sick of opinions. I am weary to bear them; my soul loathes the frothy food. Give me solid, substantial religion; give me a humble, gentle lover of God and man, a man full of mercy and good fruits, a man laying himself out in the work of faith, the patience of hope, the labor of love. Let my soul be with those Christians wheresoever they be and whatsoever opinions they are of."

He published the life of a Unitarian minister for the edification of the Methodist folk, and when taken to task therefor replied, "I have nothing to do with this man's opinions, but I dare not say he is not a Christian."

But while we acknowledge the justice of this, we all realize that there is a Christian way of thinking about things, as well as one that is not Christian. Robert Ingersoll may have been an excellent man, but his was not a Christian philosophy. Herbert Spencer was a man of the finest character, whose life bore many traits of the Christian ideal, but his thinking was diametrically opposed to that of Christianity, as he and every one else well understood.

We are also coming to see that philosophy bears fruit in life; that in the long run a man's moral ideals will be determined by his answer to the fundamental questions regarding the nature of existence.

Details of doctrine, such as the questions raised in the fourth century about the procession of the Holy Spirit or in the sixteenth about the nature of the Eucharist, may not have an immediate bearing upon conduct; but the deeper and more far-reaching questions regarding the existence and character of God and His relation to humanity are

bound sooner or later to determine the moral ideal. The pragmatists have taught us that any idea which has proven fruitful in actual life must be regarded as essentially true; but the converse of this proposition is equally valid, namely, that a true idea will work good to humanity and a false one will work harm.

It is of the highest importance, therefore, that we shall know what is the essential Christian philosophy. What is Christianity's answer to the deepest questions of the human spirit concerning the nature of reality, the ground of human existence, the end and purpose of life?

Volumes have been written on this question, and it is difficult to sum the matter up within the limits of a single chapter in any way that shall be entirely satisfactory.

There are four elements, however, which may be regarded in some sort as constituting the essence of the Christian philosophy. They are the Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of Man, the Mastership of Jesus Christ,

and the Immortal Destiny of the Human Soul. Let us see briefly what these mean.

I

Christianity grounds its life on the conviction that the Universe is neither an accident nor the product of a blind Necessity, the mere interaction of matter and motion, of law and force. On the contrary it regards all Reality as the continual activity of One who knows what He is doing and where He is going.

This is what Christianity means by a personal God. It believes that all existence has its root in a conscious and intelligent Purpose, and that this purpose is good.

I am not attempting now to defend this conviction, but merely to define it, being fully persuaded that when it is rightly understood it commends itself to intelligence, and stands in its own right, without need of further witness. It is simply the faith that life is not meaningless; that the intelligibility of Nature which makes science possible is a

sufficient ground for confidence in the rationality of the whole process.

Christianity has nothing to do with questions of order and method in creation; but it stands ready to defend to the uttermost its conviction that life is real and earnest and worth while, and that it is grounded in no blind and barren mechanism but in an eternal and patient purpose for good not unlike that of a wise father for his children.

This of course implies the spiritual sonship of humanity. It suggests that man is capable of understanding in some degree the reason and purpose of his existence; that there is in him a capacity for some measure of spiritual communion with the Being Who created him and to Whom he is morally responsible for the use he makes of the gift and opportunity of life.

No doubt when one undertakes to think these simple propositions through they involve a considerable amount of philosophical and theological reasoning. They raise many

perplexing questions. It is possible we shall never fully understand them or exhaust their significance.

But in the terms in which we have stated them they are broad and simple and fundamental. A Christian is a man who grounds his life upon these propositions; and no man who denies them can be completely and fruitfully a Christian, no matter how nearly he approximates the Christian ideal in his personal life.

This is not saying that a man will lose his soul for denying these principles; but there can be no doubt that in the long run the Christian ideal stands or falls with them; and the nineteenth-century philosophy which began by questioning them has issued in the twentieth-century doctrine — exemplified these last days — that might makes right, and that the Christian doctrine of brotherhood and mutual service must be cast as rubbish to the void.

II

Christianity likewise pins its faith to the dignity and worth of humanity, and lays the foundation for its ethical teaching in the doctrine of universal brotherhood. It insists on a measure of moral freedom in human nature. It refuses to interpret humanity by its brute origin; it measures man rather by his spiritual kinship with his Creator.

There is nothing especially distinctive in this, as compared with other forms of religious faith. The stoic philosophy in particular was akin to the Christian ethics in the lofty dignity of its conception of human values. Christianity simply represents the completest development of the spiritual interpretation of humanity, finding the basis for its conception of human dignity in its doctrine of God.

The point, however, to be kept in mind in this connection is that Christianity has actually superseded all other forms of religion in the thought life of the modern world; and

the question is not between Christianity's conception of humanity and that set forth by other faiths, but between Christianity and the scientific doctrine which regards mankind as nothing more than a by-product of evolution, being in reality nothing but an exceedingly intricate automaton, whose conscious processes are nothing more than chemical reactions — in Spencer's phrase, "motor excitations in the ganglia."

Christianity refuses to be bound by this doctrine of mechanism.

It insists that such a theory of existence leaves out all the most important elements of the problem and simply abandons all attempt to interpret reality.

Claiming the right to believe that the Universe itself is personal rather than mechanical in its deepest ground, Christianity looks upon the human personality as akin to the divine, and hence vested with all the dignity and infinite value of sonship to God.

Finding this worth in man as man, it refuses to be bound by caste and class distinc-

tions; to regard any race, however backward or degraded, as alien or outcast.

It declares that the strong and the weak, the civilized and the barbarian, the cultured and the ignorant, are bound together by ties which cannot be broken and which it is perilous to ignore.

Thus it finds in the essential character of mankind the ground for its personal ethics and no less for its social theory. It bids the strong bear the burdens of the weak, and to use the advantages given them by their larger opportunities in the interest of the common good, that the whole level of humanity may be lifted and the path of spiritual attainment be opened to the weakest and most ignorant.

No way of looking at humanity less comprehensive than this or with a less resolute faith in the essential worth and dignity of human nature and the possibilities hidden beneath the most unpromising exterior can be regarded as Christian.

III

Christianity is more, however, than a system of metaphysics or of ethics.

It is an historical system of faith, of worship, and of practice, which traces its origin to the life and teachings of a single man whose character it regards as the embodiment of its loftiest ideals, and to whose personality it pays the utmost reverence, both offering to him and demanding in his name the highest allegiance.

No type of thought and life which ignores this history can consistently be called Christian. We may not settle in advance the problems of historical research, nor insist that spiritual truth can be absolutely bound up with any happening in time or space; but we have a right to insist that the history of Christianity shall receive adequate explanation.

Sober thought refuses to believe that a great and creative personality can be the product of imagination.

The greatest characters of fiction and mythology are when all is said the product of manufacture, of the synthesis of traits and characteristics found in the experience of humanity itself. Such products of the imagination always bear the mark of the tool. They share the weakness and limitation of their creators. No one imagines that Jupiter or Hercules, that Don Quixote or Jean Valjean, ever existed. We know plainly that the former were the product of the collective imagination of the Greeks, as the latter of the creative genius of their authors.

It is far otherwise with the characters of Confucius or Gautama or Socrates. Little as we know of the actual history of these men, whose images have come down to us colored by the imagination of their disciples, no serious student of history has the slightest doubt not only that they existed, but that they made upon the mind and heart of their time essentially the impression that is handed down to us.

If the character of Jesus Christ transcends

them all, so that by common consent it is impossible to sum him up under the categories of ordinary humanity, it is the more unbelievable that he was the product of the crude imaginations and narrow prejudices of a group of Jewish peasants and rabbis. Christianity does not stand or fall with any particular attempt to understand or interpret the person of Christ; nevertheless in a real and abiding sense Christianity is Christ.

The only God it knows is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is to say, it believes in God as Jesus revealed Him by precept and example, and can think of God in no other terms. When it wants to know what God is like, it turns to Jesus Christ for the answer to this question.

It acknowledges Jesus as the ethical Master of mankind. It believes that he revealed the possibilities of manhood; that he embodied in his own character the loftiest ideals in a way that cannot be transcended; that every succeeding generation may understand him more perfectly, may more com-

pletely incarnate his ideal in its ethical life, but that it cannot outgrow him or leave him behind.

There is one element in the Christian interpretation of Jesus which is largely overlooked in the religious thinking of the present day, but which has nevertheless played an extremely important part in the history of the Christian faith. That is the conception of Jesus as in some sense the Redeemer and Savior of mankind.

Christian thought has from the beginning looked on Jesus as something more than a spiritual teacher, or even as the incarnation of the moral and spiritual ideal. It has found in him the supreme spiritual dynamic.

His death has been regarded as the central moral tragedy of history, in some strange fashion involving the character of God Himself in a hand-to-hand conflict with the powers of evil; so that it holds a unique relation to the spiritual history of the race, and is a fountain of healing power wherein the

ceaseless tragedy of human experience shall find its solution and the moral weakness of mankind be strengthened for ultimate victory.

Once more we are not concerned to defend this doctrine, or even to define it in detail, but only to point out its central place in historic Christianity. If it is ever to be set aside as of no essential importance, the burden of proof is upon those who would reject it. It may have been subject to many grossly crude and imperfect interpretations, but that it has hitherto held the central place in the Christian philosophy of the spiritual life there can be no doubt.

In the Christian way of thinking about things Jesus Christ is more than an ideal. He is the unfailing fountain of spiritual power; and he holds that place in virtue of the totality of his human experience, whereby he can enter sympathetically into the struggles and passions of the weakest of his brethren and can enable them to be more than conquerors in life's battle.

It is evident that the essential thing in the Christian attitude toward Jesus is not intellectual interpretation but ethical loyalty. It does not ask of any man that he shall understand Jesus; it does insist that he shall obey him.

The modern world has grown weary of theological discussions, and it resents the attitude of orthodoxy in denying the name Christian to any who bear the spirit of the Master though they may not interpret him under the traditional forms. The attitude of Jesus himself to the men and women about him furnishes ample precedent for the broadest spirit of tolerance. But no man in the first century or the twentieth is entitled to be called a Christian who does not offer to Jesus Christ the most heartfelt loyalty. Richard Watson Gilder expressed the heart of the matter in his well-known lines:

"If Jesus Christ be man,
(And only a man), I say
That of all mankind I will cleave to him,
And to him I will cleave alway.

"If Jesus Christ be God,
(And the only God), I swear
I will follow him through heaven and hell,
The earth, the sea, and the air."

IV

The Christian faith concerning the Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of Man, and the Mastership of Jesus Christ does not, however, exhaust its thought about life; for these things find their completion in the conviction that human destiny is not limited to the brief years of earthly existence, but that to every soul is granted the opportunity and possibility of the immortal hope.

A man may be Christian in his spirit and purpose and be in doubt on this point, but there could be no *Christianity* without it. The Christian interpretation of life is one in which

"Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal silence: truths that wake,
To perish never;
Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavor,
Nor Man nor Boy,
Nor all that is at enmity with joy
Can utterly abolish or destroy!"

The Christian view of immortality is not some vague hope for the persistence of the race, for the treasuring up in some other form of existence of the net results of human experience, somehow detached from the persistence of the human consciousness. It is the simple and inextinguishable belief that death is only an incident in individual experience, and that the soul which begins here graduates from this kindergarten and primary school into the larger experience of an exhaustless future.

Nor can we ignore the fact that Christianity regards this conception of life as involving grave moral risk. The crude notions of Hell which medieval Christianity inherited from paganism may have been outgrown. Our growing experience of the healing power of spiritual truth, our insight that punishment is in its essence remedial rather than retaliatory, may enlarge our hope

> " That somehow good
> Will be the final goal of ill;"

but that must not blind us to the note of

solemn warning which has formed so essential a part of the message of every great spiritual teacher, and was so gravely and sternly enunciated by Jesus Christ.

Life from the Christian viewpoint is a matter of infinite possibilities, and for that very reason a thing not to be trifled with or lived idly or carelessly. The brighter the radiance of its spiritual light, the darker by contrast the shadow cast by moral failure and wrong.

The essential meaning of the whole system of Christian thought, from its belief in God and its loyalty to Jesus Christ to its fairest pictures of the immortal hope, is that life has a great and inexhaustible meaning, by reason of which it is also an achievement and task which is set before every human soul. To him that overcometh shall be given a crown of life, but those who through wilfulness rebel against the high demands of the spirit, or through cowardice make the great refusal, can have no part in the glory of such a destiny.

The largest hope that the yearning sympathy of the greatest souls has been able to write over the shadow of such loss is that those who have made shipwreck of life may pass into

> "That sad, obscure, sequestered state
> Where God unmakes but to remake the soul
> He else made first in vain, which must not be."

This then is the Christian philosophy.

Men may differ in their understanding of any of the elements of this thought, but no philosophy of life which leaves out any of these things can be termed in any adequate sense a Christian philosophy. A man may follow the Christian ideal or manifest the Christian spirit without accepting this philosophy, but such moral and spiritual grace is none the less the fruit of the Christian teaching, the twilight glimmer of light after the sun has set. In the long run there can be no day without the sunshine.

The Christian ideal cannot long survive the decay of the Christian philosophy. If this way of thinking about things be sound,

we may more adequately understand it as the ages go by, but we cannot exhaust or transcend it.

If Christianity is in any sense the ultimate religious faith, it is this Christianity which we have however imperfectly outlined. This is what all the theologies have tried to say. These are the essential ideas which underlie the teaching of all the churches and which have been embodied in the Christian thought of all the ages since the days of the apostles, however the form and emphasis may have varied from generation to generation; and this is the first part of our answer to the question, What is a Christian?

II

THE ETHICS OF JESUS

We tried in our first discussion to show that Christianity has by no means meant the same thing at every stage of its history; and moreover that it is made up of several elements and involves several distinct points of view, all of which are essential to a complete understanding of what is meant by it.

The first of these elements was found to be the Christian philosophy of life; and we undertook to sum up briefly those things which a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health.

We come now to the second important element in the complete answer to the question, What is a Christian? namely, the Christian standard of life, its moral ideal.

And first of all, we must undertake to analyze the moral teachings of the founder of

Christianity. We are all agreed that a doctrine is known by its fruits, and that no one ought to be called a Christian, however correct his intellectual notions, unless his life squares with the principles of his Master.

Again we come to a subject upon which volumes have been written. In a general way we know what we mean by a Christian life based on the teaching and example of Jesus. The Golden Rule, purity of life, patience, gentleness, charity, unselfishness, — these are the things which go to make up the Christian ideal in the common thought of mankind. It is when we come to particularize, to define the elements of these principles or their application to the problems of everyday life, that our difficulties arise.

I

Laying aside all the critical questions raised by modern scholarship regarding the authenticity of the New Testament records and the degree to which we are entitled to feel that we have the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus,

or even that the teaching as we have it has not been colored by the minds of the New Testament writers; and assuming that in the gospels we have a fairly accurate record of what he said, there still remain serious difficulties in the way of a satisfactory understanding of his teaching.

To begin with, Jesus made many extreme demands: "I say unto you that ye resist not evil"; "swear not at all"; "take no thought, saying, what shall we eat or what shall we drink"; "sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor," etc. On the face of it, these sayings of Jesus make an absolute demand for non-resistance, for the abjuring of patriotism and national loyalty, for poverty and even for celibacy.

Jesus also said a great many contradictory things. He bade men love their enemies, yet he said, "If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother, he cannot be my disciple." He taught the principle of non-resistance, but he likewise said, "I came not to send peace but a sword," and told his

followers that if any of them lacked a sword, he should sell his garment and buy one. He himself made a whip of small cords and drove the traders from the Temple, while the biting scorn of his bitter arraignment of the Scribes and Pharisees is not surpassed in the whole literature of invective.

The difficulty of reconciling these statements with each other or of squaring the demands of Jesus with the conditions of everyday life has led to several interpretative expedients.

The most convenient way, of course, is to adopt such sayings as please us and ignore the rest.

A good many modern interpreters, having first agreed with themselves that only the sayings which represent the passive virtues can be regarded as truly Christian, assert that when he declared these great truths Jesus rose to the supreme moral height, but that when he showed anger toward the Pharisees or displayed force against the traders in the Temple, he sinned against his own principles.

This is, of course, at the outset to forswear that loyalty to the Mastership of Jesus which Christianity historically demands. To adopt this position is to substitute something else for Christianity, which may be better and may be derived from certain elements in the Christian tradition, but which surrenders the religious history of the last nineteen centuries as abortive and futile.

Akin to this rejection of Jesus in the name of his own teachings is that other form of skepticism which regards the whole Christian program as an impractical idealism, emanating from the brain of a dreamer, and which a practical world will do well to ignore. At best it can only be classified with Plato's *Republic* and the *Utopia* of Sir Thomas More as suggestive attempts to picture ideal conditions, the practical value of which lies simply in the way in which they illustrate certain phases of ethical philosophy. They may play no small part in the training of the philosophical mind, but are not to be taken seriously as contributions to a practical social program.

Still another class of interpreters regard the teaching of Jesus as intended only for those who are willing to withdraw from the world of everyday life and live for the ideal kingdom of the future. They were never intended for the guidance of humanity in general. Jesus had no thought of Christianizing this world, of developing a Christian civilization; but only of gathering out of the world a loyal remnant who were expected to follow his precepts so far as possible in their relation with the world about them, but could expect to see them completely fulfilled only in that divine event to which the whole creation moves.

The historic attitude of the Catholic Church toward the teaching of Jesus is an attempt to compromise by distinguishing between the "precepts" of Jesus, which were intended to be obeyed by every one and to lay down the principles of a Christian social order in the world, and the "counsels of perfection," which could be perfectly realized only under the ideal conditions of another world, but

might be chosen and put in practice so far as the weakness of the flesh would permit by those who felt called to be saints.

The ordinary citizen might make war, accumulate wealth, marry, and live the common life of mankind in the world, guided only by the general principles of integrity and loyalty to the truth. The higher call and the life of religious devotion demanded poverty, chastity, and non-resistance, and could be followed only by the monk and nun. It involved a complete separation from the world and a denial of all human ties.

There remains for consideration one other class of interpreters, of whom Tolstoi was the most conspicuous representative, who demand literal obedience to the precepts of Jesus in the world of common life; who in obedience to his command regarding the taking of oaths would do away with the state, which rests upon the oath of allegiance; in obedience to the law of non-resistance would forbid the police power no less than war, and require a man to remain

passive, not only when his own life or property is in danger, but even when the life or honor of his wife or daughter is attacked; in obedience to the law of poverty would forbid all property and establish universal communism; and in obedience to the law of love would require that the slightest whim of the meanest beggar shall be law to his prosperous neighbors.

Regarding all of these methods of interpreting Jesus, three or four things should be said:

The notion that the Kingdom of God is an *imperium in imperio*, a little group of brands plucked from the burning, of elect souls who have chosen to separate themselves from a doomed world and to be guided by laws and principles utterly contradictory to the life of the world and completely practicable only in a future state, is an entirely understandable one in behalf of which much might be said. It was for centuries essentially the accepted understanding of Christianity, and is held to-day in its main outlines

by the whole conservative party in the Christian church.

If we reject this viewpoint, it is only for two reasons; first, that it has itself never been able consistently to carry out its own literalism, but has weakened its spiritual power by a never-ending succession of compromises with the world; and second, because we believe that the essential principles of Jesus have a wider validity than men have dreamed, and that his spiritual power is in fact in the long run capable not merely of redeeming a mere handful of elect spirits out of a doomed race, but of redeeming humanity itself, of purifying and elevating the whole of human society and of Christianizing civilization. Of such a dream the New Testament writers themselves caught glimpses when they wrote of a day when the kingdoms of this world should become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ.

This conviction is supported by the fact that some of the religious ideals cherished by the earlier interpreters of Christianity have

been definitely set aside by the verdict of history.

Monastic asceticism is one of these. The monastic orders failed, not because their leaders ceased to be loyal to the principles with which they began, but because the monastic ideal was itself a false and distorted one which was contrary not only to the weakness of fallen human nature, but to the real demands of the loftiest spirituality.

If Christianity means that it is better to starve and mistreat the body than to live a normal, wholesome physical life; that the loftiest spiritual attainments are not compatible with the obligations and responsibilities of marriage and parenthood, or the loyal discharge of the obligations of everyday life; then the world has once for all discarded Christianity, and we had best recognize the fact and set about adjusting ourselves to the situation as it exists.

Mankind will never go back to the ideals of St. Simeon Stylites, who lived for thirty years on the top of a pillar; of St. Catherine,

who had herself bound to a cross for several hours of every day; of St. Anthony, who fled to the desert to escape the contamination of the world; nor of any other of the ascetics of the medieval world, whose picturesqueness at the distance of several centuries is only equaled by the morbid unwholesomeness of their whole attitude toward life.

The double moral standard involved in the Catholic distinction between precepts and counsels of perfection is likewise one which offends the moral judgment of mankind. We all refuse to believe that there is one standard of life for one man and another for his neighbor.

Of course, we realize that for particular occasions and under special circumstances a greater demand may be made upon some individuals than others. College boys in training for a football game are subject to a mode of life which is not normal and which if continued too long would defeat its own end of high physical efficiency; but

for a brief period the special sacrifices demanded bring about proportionate results.

So a doctor is compelled by the demands of his profession to make sacrifices which the ordinary citizen escapes; the teacher and the minister must make peculiar sacrifices to their calling; the work of the missionary demands a degree of heroism and self-devotion to which everyday life is a stranger; the soldier lives under conditions which would utterly destroy humanity if the attempt should be made to apply them universally.

But we refuse to believe that these special sacrifices involve any higher degree of spiritual worth than the common life. The categories of right and wrong can be applied only on a universal basis. A system of ethical teaching must be susceptible of universal application or it is valueless. The teaching of Jesus is for all mankind or none.

Finally, there is no hope in literalism. If one logically and consistently attempts impartially to apply the principle of literal interpretation to everything which Jesus said,

he lands in hopeless confusion and contradiction.

Even Tolstoi can make headway only by accepting one or two of the sayings of Jesus which he will interpret literally and which he will then make the standard for the interpretation of everything else; anything which seems to contradict these sayings is set aside or interpreted out of existence.

II

Is there any way out of this deadlock? Can we interpret the teachings of Jesus in any way which will reveal them as clearly and indisputably the supreme law of human life?

There are two or three guiding principles which must be applied in any adequate study of the words of Christ.

The first is the clear recognition of his paradoxical method.

As Wendt pointed out, Jesus was an Oriental, with the Oriental's poetical gift, his free-playing imagination and love for figurative

speech. It was necessary to startle men out of their mental and spiritual sluggishness; to challenge their attention and to compel them to think. Accordingly, Jesus habitually employed modes of speech which have been an unending stumblingblock to our forthright and literal western minds.

Thoughtful readers of the New Testament are coming to realize how much of metaphor there is in the speech of Jesus. When he declared men must eat his flesh and drink his blood, we no longer puzzle our brains with metaphysical mysteries as to how the bread and wine of the Eucharist can be transformed into the actual literal flesh that hung on the Cross, or the blood that was poured out of his side. We frankly recognize a daring metaphor.

Even the doctrine of the New Birth is nowadays interpreted less by the grammar and the dictionary than by the broad recognition of a general spiritual law of which birth is the aptest symbol.

We do not so readily recognize the number

of statements to be found among the sayings of Jesus which are couched in an extreme and superlative form that could not possibly be accepted literally. An instance is his keenly humorous remark about the futility of trying to remove the grain of dust from our neighbor's eye when one has a floor joist in his own.

So when he said, "I came not to send peace but a sword," no one has ever imagined that he meant what he said; men have always understood the saying as a vivid and startling expression of the inevitable effect of a spiritual revelation in a world so largely governed by selfish and unspiritual motives.

In like manner, when he promised his followers a hundred-fold return in this present life for all the sacrifices they had made for the Kingdom of Heaven, Peter and John were not misled into expecting to become possessors of vast landed estates; nor did even Tolstoi attempt to interpret this saying literally.

Our common sense reduces the parallax in such sayings as instinctively as our brain

unifies the double visual image projected by our two eyes.

So when Jesus declared that no man could be his disciple without hating his own mother, no one has ever for a moment imagined that Jesus meant this literally. We recognize it plainly for what it is, an extreme and startling statement of a profound spiritual truth. The statement in the form in which it was made could not by any possibility be true. We frankly discount it by the application of common sense.

The same principle is applicable to the remark of Jesus that faith equivalent to a grain of mustard seed could transplant trees and remove mountains. No one imagines that two or three earnest and devoted Christians by agreeing in prayer could have brought the Panama Canal into existence without physical effort. We regard the vision and courage which attempted so gigantic a project and put it through to a successful conclusion as a real fulfilment of the promise of Jesus.

These instances of paradoxical method are sufficient to excite the suspicion that possibly the other startlingly difficult sayings of Jesus, over which the conscience of Christendom has stumbled for two thousand years, are susceptible of the same interpretation.

Some one asks in alarm, "Did not Jesus mean what he said?"

We answer, Yes, by all means, but he very seldom said what he meant.

He undertook to challenge the human conscience by a loftier ethical ideal than men had dreamed of.

He knew the danger of laying down precepts which succeeding generations under ever modifying conditions must find increasingly difficult of interpretation and application.

He wanted to compel men to think out their moral principles, and to be guided by them because they had come to recognize their validity, not because they had been announced with authority.

Accordingly he was forever saying things which could not be literally interpreted, in

order that men might be driven in spite of themselves to think out their meaning.

The principle of non-resistance, the prohibition of oaths, and the warning against anxiety for temporal blessings must all be interpreted by this principle.

When he bade men resist not evil, he was not prohibiting the punishment of wrong or the defense of the right, he was declaring the supreme worth of the virtue of forbearance.

The prohibition of oaths had nothing to do with political allegiance, it meant simply that a man's word ought to be as good as his bond.

The warning against worldliness and especially the spirit of anxious absorption in material things was nothing more than a vivid, thought-compelling statement of the superior worth of the spiritual over the temporal.

The second guiding principle for the interpretation of the teachings of Jesus is to

recognize that he was stating ultimate principles rather than laying down specific rules.

Every lawyer knows the difference between constitutional law and statutory enactment. Strictly speaking, a constitution should be nothing but the statement of general fundamental principles. The statute law is an attempt to apply these principles under specific conditions to specific cases.

It is impossible to enact any law that is valid at all times and under all conditions. It *is* possible so to analyze the principles of justice as to arrive at a fundamental legal doctrine which is universally valid and which the judgment and practical sense of every generation must apply for itself.

It is impossible to find among the sayings of Jesus anything that is unmistakably intended as definite command, to be always and everywhere obeyed. Some of his sayings have that appearance at first glance, but when we look carefully at the circumstances under which they were uttered and their relation to his other and broader sayings, we see

plainly that they were at most nothing more than illustrations of a back-lying general principle.

What Jesus undertook to do was not to legislate for all times and all conditions of human society, for that in the nature of things is impossible; but he sought by every means to establish in the hearts of his followers the recognition of the broad fundamental social and ethical principles upon which all sound living must rest, and which constitute the supreme moral ideal of humanity, — the flying goal toward which we may forever approach but which we can never exhaust and surpass.

The third guiding principle is that the aim of Jesus was not to conform the outward actions of men to the letter of the moral law, but rather to transform them by the awakening of a loftier and truer inward spirit.

This is the significance of his doctrine of the New Birth. He declared that the only way to get good fruit is to make the tree good.

If one desires grapes, he must not look for them on a thorn tree. Other moralists have aimed at constructing a perfect ethical system; Jesus aimed at regenerating human lives, that the law might be forever written on men's hearts.

Here once more we must be careful not to press his sayings to their absolute limit. He did not mean that some men were essentially thorn trees, from whom no good fruit could be expected. But he recognized what every thoughtful person knows, that "'tis one thing to know and another to practice"; that external pressure, whether of physical force or of social constraint, may compel men outwardly to obey the correct rules of conduct, but it cannot make bad men good. Nothing can do that but some spiritual influence whereby their whole inner attitude toward life is changed.

Accordingly Jesus was more concerned to set in motion spiritual forces which should of themselves work out in human life a truly moral order than he was to present

men with a perfect Pattern for their outward conduct.

The adoption of this mode of interpreting the ethics of Jesus seems to leave us without any ultimate Moral Authority. "The Pope has wine, but no wife. The Sultan has many wives, but no wine." Which of them is right? Or are they both partly right and partly wrong?

As a matter of fact we have never really had an authority, appeal to which could settle this question. The very fact that Christendom itself is split in two over the question as to where the seat of authority lies indicates that the whole matter rests at bottom on our choice of authorities, which in turn is dictated by a thousand influences of desire and prejudice as well as of reason.

So our loss is only an imaginary one. In the long run nothing has any real claim upon our ethical obedience which does not commend itself to our trained and cultivated moral intuition.

Nothing is gained by paying verbal trib-

ute to the authority of a moral principle, and then locking it away in a glass case because it is not practical under the limitations of everyday life. Even an imperfect moral ideal which is a living factor in our life and has an actual influence upon our conduct is worth infinitely more than the most perfect ideal to which we pay only verbal reverence.

If we will take our common sense, stimulated and purified by a loyal devotion to the loftiest spiritual purpose, and apply it to understanding the teaching of Jesus, we shall find that these three principles which we have outlined will be sufficient to put us in touch with his purpose, to enable us to understand and grasp his spirit, and to comprehend the essential ethical principles which he sought to establish in human life.

III

We come now to ask what are the essential elements in the Ethics of Jesus? They are four in number:

First, character is the chief good.

Not possessions, nor fame, nor honor; not success nor prosperity; not physical pleasure and ease; not even happiness in the common understanding of the word which implies the satisfaction of all the ordinary desires of the human heart — including many that are entirely normal and in most cases legitimate: none of these can completely satisfy the human spirit nor fulfil the highest demands of life.

No man has attained who has not become a good man, pure and loyal and true of soul; whose character, though bought at the cost of all the common aims of existence, will stand the test of every temptation and bring him into communion with the Divine.

Second, judgment must lie upon the spirit of life rather than upon its outward conformity to the letter of the law.

This is the other side of the principle suggested a moment ago, that Jesus aimed at producing a right spirit rather than at shaping men's outward acts. The essence of the

moral law itself lies in its spirit rather than in the letter. Hence men must be judged by the spirit which seeks expression in outward acts rather than by their acts themselves.

The outward law concerns itself with the various degrees of the crime of murder; Jesus declared that the real sin lies in the spirit of hatred which engenders the crime. The law carefully guards the outward purity of men's lives; Jesus said, "Whoso looketh on the sin with desire hath committed it already in his heart."

This is a principle which cuts both ways.

Its demand is infinitely more searching than that of the outward law. By it a great many respectable citizens of irreproachable conduct stand condemned, because in their hearts they have transgressed through desires they do not deem it expedient to gratify.

But on the other hand it relieves men of the intolerable burden of Pharisaic literalism. "'Tis not what man does that exalts him, but what man would do."

"What I aspired to be,
And was not, comforts me:
A brute I might have been but would not sink i' the scale."

Men are to be judged, not by the success with which they have put their ideals into practice, but by their inward love and loyalty to the ideal; as a child's often mistaken attempts to help are taken by a wise love not for what they accomplish but for the motive that prompts them.

Thus men are forever set free from the bondage of the letter, to live henceforth in the liberty of the spirit.

Third, love is the supreme dynamic of the moral life.

Love toward God is the fountain of spiritual power.

Love toward men is the spirit which alone can inspire those actions which shall be essentially right.

The love of which Jesus speaks is not the pleasant sentiment of friendly affection, but "the set purpose to serve and please." It is

the quality which St. Paul celebrates in the Thirteenth Chapter of First Corinthians, and implies such a genuine recognition of each other's need and such a genuine spirit of good will as must make wrong to one's neighbor impossible because unthinkable, and bind humanity together in a perfect civilization.

Finally, the aim of all life is mutual service. No man is truly good who merely abstains from doing harm. The final test of all actions is whether they serve the well-being of men.

These four principles sum up the whole of the teaching of Jesus. It is these that differentiate it from the ethics of Confucius or Buddha. Though susceptible of such brief statement, they are without limit in their application to human conditions and in their power to uplift and transform human society.

IV

In order that men might better understand the character of these general principles, we

find Jesus applying them to some of the specific problems of life as he met them from day to day. In the examination of these instances other subordinate principles emerge which are still general in form, but which serve to narrow the field of application and to clarify our judgment in applying the larger principles of the Master to the problems which arise in our own lives.

The first is loyalty to truth and right at all cost. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake."

Martyrdom is not an end in itself, a thing to be sought for its own sake.

There is no particular virtue in suffering, nor is the martyr to be regarded as more truly and greatly a saint than many another whose outward life has been uneventful and whose moral contests have not been open to the public gaze.

The soldier on the battle field gives the most spectacular exhibition of courage and patriotic loyalty, but for all that he may be no

more worthy a citizen than the wife who suffers alone at home, or the man of business who struggles arduously and patiently to provide the sinews of war and to keep alive the whole nation upon whose backing the success of the army depends.

Gouverneur Morris and Benjamin Franklin were as true patriots and sacrificed themselves for their country's good as unhesitatingly during the troublous days of the American struggle for independence as any soldier whose bloody footprints stained the snow at Valley Forge. "They also serve who only stand and wait."

The crux of the whole matter is the inner loyalty which no threat of pain or ruin can shake. No man is a disciple of Jesus who is not ready to take up the Cross in the Master's name.

The second is the doctrine that enmity and revenge must give place to forbearance and love.

The spirit of retaliation is a survival of

primitive brute instinct which must be uprooted from the human heart.

Even in the administration of justice we are beginning to see that patience and forbearance may enable us to transform the criminal into a good citizen.

In private life we all know, if we do not always practice, the principle that forgiveness and the returning of good for evil heap coals of fire on our enemy's head, and go far toward making enmity impossible.

Finally, selfish ease and indulgence must everywhere give place to the spirit of mutual helpfulness if society is to rest upon a sure foundation.

> "Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
> Where wealth accumulates and men decay."

A Scottish philosopher several hundred years ago hesitatingly suggested that the rulers of a city would commit no wrong if they should so legislate as to put an end to poverty within the city's gates. We are coming to see that as a matter of social stability the existence of

great wealth side by side with abject poverty is a serious menace; and that the few have no right to luxurious ease and self-indulgence while the many are shut out from the necessities of a well-ordered life.

So the science of human society is coming to pay tribute to the insight of Jesus, who taught as a matter of personal righteousness that men must give up their own selfish comfort and ease for the sake of their neighbor's need.

This brief review of the teachings of Jesus is, of course, extremely cursory and superficial, but enough has been said to show the essential character and purpose of his ethical doctrine.

To push any of the sayings of Jesus to their logical extreme is to weaken, not to strengthen, their significance for humanity.

Surely the outline here given of his ethical principles does not soften his demand for the complete surrender of the heart of man to the will of God. This is no soft and easy doctrine which is here set forth.

But neither is it an impossible demand which must of necessity take no account of average humanity, and leave men floundering in the discouragement of acknowledged spiritual impotence.

Jesus began his ethical teaching with the demand for a righteousness which should exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees; but he closed it with the promise that the simplest act of kindness toward the least of men should be regarded as an act of loyalty and devotion to the Eternal Judge Himself.

III

THE CHRISTIAN AND WAR

In our discussion of the ethical teachings of Jesus we found that the two most important things to be borne in mind in approaching the sayings of the Master are, first, that he continually employed the method of paradox in order to startle men into seriousness and compel them to think; and second, that he was concerned with laying down fundamental principles rather than with enacting specific rules of conduct.

The main elements in his ethical teaching were found to be, first, that character is the chief good; second, that judgment is based upon the motive and spirit which underlie human action rather than upon conformity to the letter of the law; third, that service is the aim, and love the supreme dynamic, of a rightly ordered life.

We come now to apply these principles to the first of the two chief ethical problems of mankind, the problem which has been forced violently upon the attention of humanity during the past few months; namely, that of war.

The question before us is a threefold one. First, can a Christian consistently engage in war even in obedience to his country's demand; second, can war be defended in any respect as a means of settling international disputes, without coming into direct conflict with the spirit and teaching of Jesus; and third, can it be abolished?

If the principles which we have adopted for the interpretation of the New Testament be sound, the question is not to be settled by appealing to the specific words of Jesus, no matter how emphatic they may appear.

The Quakers have long defended the doctrine of non-resistance by appealing to the words of Christ.

Tolstoi, as we have seen, founded his doctrine upon two injunctions of Jesus: "Resist

not evil," and "Swear not at all." The first he declared to be absolute in its character and to forbid not only private revenge, but even the organized attempt of society to suppress wrong through the exercise of the police power. The second was interpreted to forbid the taking of the oath of allegiance, and so to put an end to government.

This mode of interpretation runs so directly counter, not only to our common sense but even to our most carefully reasoned theories of society and the state, that Professor Harnack is justified in saying that if Tolstoi's interpretation be Christianity, then Christianity has no further concern for us.

The instinct of self-defense, and much more of the defense of the weak and dependent, is too deep-seated to be gainsaid. The instinct for government is equally fundamental. To assume that Jesus Christ had any idea of overthrowing either of these fundamental characteristics of humanity is either to make him a visionary enthusiast whose maunderings have no interest for sensible

men; or else to assume that humanity as originally constituted is a complete failure, and that the Almighty has undertaken to destroy the work of His hands in order to make a new start.

Both these alternatives are so extreme that they ought to be adopted only as a last resort. As a matter of fact, Tolstoi himself took back with his left hand all that he had given with his right, when, after strenuously insisting that the words of Jesus were to be literally understood and unshrinkingly applied to human problems, he confessed that this was an impossible ideal, and declared that it was set forth by Jesus on the principle that one must aim very much higher than the mark he really intends to hit, as a man who desires to cross a violent current to a point directly opposite must appear to be rowing toward a point far up the stream.

This concession leaves us exactly where we were before, and bids us ask what is that point directly opposite which Jesus would have us reach. In answering this question,

we have no other guide than that wholesome and spiritually-minded common sense which we found to be everywhere necessary to the understanding of Jesus.

A sound interpretation of his teaching avoids these impossible extremes of literalism and at the same time affords a principle sufficiently lofty and powerful to serve as the supreme guide in the affairs of men and nations.

I

When we look closely at those sayings of Jesus which seem to inculcate the doctrine of non-resistance, we find that they are in reality nothing more than specific applications of his fundamental principles of love and service.

When these principles are applied to the differences which inevitably arise between men in everyday life, Jesus interpreted them as carrying with them three things; first, a demand that all men should recognize the rights and necessities of others, preferring to sacrifice themselves rather than to cause

others to suffer; second, the spirit of the utmost forbearance, patience, and self-control in dealing with those who would inflict wrong upon us; third, the utter absence of the spirit of revenge in our attitude toward those who have wronged us. The disciple is to forgive unto seventy times seven. We are bidden to love our enemies, to return good for evil, to overcome evil with good.

In these three principles is summed up the entire ethical philosophy of Jesus as it relates to the natural conflict of rights which inevitably takes place in an imperfectly developed social order, as well as to the more serious disorders which arise from the presence of evil and perverse men.

Regarding these principles, it is easy to see at the outset that they run directly counter to the spontaneous impulses of human nature. It is natural for men to seek their own welfare, to assert their own rights, and to leave others to look out for themselves.

The political economy of a century ago erected this principle of self-interest into the

governing law of human affairs, and declared that all that was necessary in this world was to give it a free rein and let the conflict of interests bring about a stable social order, as the balance of centrifugal and centripetal forces keeps the earth in its orbit.

A further study of the laws which govern human relations, however, has cast serious doubt upon this principle; and economists to-day are seeking for the most efficient means of restraining the impulses of self-interest and insuring a wholesome regard among men for the interest of others. It may be we shall ultimately discover that the law laid down by Jesus Christ is in reality the soundest foundation for commercial prosperity and social well-being.

There is no doubt, however, that the teaching of Jesus runs directly counter to natural impulse, nor can we doubt that history hitherto has been based on the opposite principle of self-assertion. The law of the survival of the fittest has governed the rise and decay of empires; and war has been,

from the dawn of time, the principal occupation of the human race.

Yet there can be no doubt that if these principles of Jesus were put in operation, they would go far to abolish strife of all kinds between men and nations.

If we may assume that there is possible a just settlement for all differences of opinion and all conflicts of right, then the law of mutual regard and of mutual forbearance is the only foundation for the attainment of that end.

Before we undertake to apply these principles to the problem before us, it is necessary to ask how far they involve the doctrine of non-resistance. Do they forbid self-defense or the punishment of criminals?

By no means. Love does not mean sentimental indulgence or weak yielding to the impulses of others. The steadfast enforcement of righteousness is the truest love and the largest service. That father is not the most loving who is most weakly indulgent

toward his children, nor is there anything in experience to indicate that to allow violent and wicked men to have their own way and to work their will upon the weak and defenseless can have any good end.

But experience increasingly shows that the steadfast application of the principles of forbearance, patience, self-control, and forgiveness are in the long run the most powerful weapons against oppression and wrong. A soft answer turneth away wrath.

An immediate application of force may sometimes be necessary to restrain the evildoer and prevent the injury that he would work; but when once he has been prevented from putting his evil impulses into effect, the application of the principles of Jesus to all further dealings with him is a much more effective way of meeting the situation than the opposite method of violence and revenge.

We have learned that even in the punishment of criminals nothing is gained by undue severity. At the opening of the nineteenth century more than a hundred crimes were punishable

by death under the English law, yet this severity did not avail to put an end to crime.

We are coming to see that the object of punishment is not vengeance but reformation. The Warden of Sing Sing prison inaugurated a new era not long since when he went unarmed into a room filled with prisoners, sent out all the guards, and talked with the prisoners, man to man, regarding various phases of their life together. In treating them as men and not as dogs he enlisted all of their own best impulses, and already we are told that the results are apparent in the temper of the men and their attitude toward the obligations that are laid upon them. If this is true in dealing with hardened criminals, it is infinitely more true in the common relationships of human life, wherein by far the greater portion of our differences grow out of our ignorance of each other's life and our failure to understand each other's needs and desires.

II

At this point the question arises, Can these principles be applied to international affairs? Can states be called upon to practice the law of self-sacrifice and service?

General von Bernhardi emphatically says, No; that the state exists to protect and enhance the welfare of its subjects, whose interests are jeopardized in any act of self-sacrifice on the part of the state; and that, therefore, the Christian law cannot be held to apply to international affairs. Let us look at this matter a little more closely.

There can be no doubt that there is an element of truth in the contention that the powers and responsibilities of the state differ in many respects from those of the individual. Society is an organism. It is more than a mere aggregation of individuals, and its rights and duties are more than the sum of individual rights.

The state exists not because individuals

have agreed together to band themselves into such an organization and to delegate to it certain of their own individual rights and powers, which they undertake henceforth to waive. Rather the state is brought into being through the very existence of a large number of people living together in a restricted territory, where their various needs and common interests create the necessity for an organized life.

There are a great many things which society as a whole can do, which no individual ever could do. Both the need and the power to supply it are created through the existence of the common life; so that there is a very real sense in which a nation is to be regarded as a greater person, with its own rights, duties, and responsibilities, and with its own larger conscience.

Even the mob spirit is something other than the sum of the individual impulses of the people who constitute it. Public opinion is not merely the sum of the opinions of the majority of individuals, or even that sum minus the

sum of the opinions of the minority. It is something more intangible and at the same time more real and powerful than this.

The spontaneous personification of nations which takes place in our common speech illustrates a half-unconscious yet instinctive recognition of this truth. Uncle Sam, shrewd, tolerant, humorous, kindly, does not exist alone in the imagination of cartoonists. He is a real being, the embodiment in concrete form of all the common characteristics and impulses and ideals of the American people. Bluff, hearty John Bull is the spirit of England. A truth is expressed under the guise of these half-humorous personifications which defies analysis in the terms of logic.

This STATE–PERSON of necessity exercises many powers and rights greater than those of the individual. The right of the state to punish wrong-doing is not simply the delegated blood right of the individual to vengeance. The state stands to the wrong-doer rather in the relation of a wise father to a wilful and rebellious child. No individual

could ever take that relation to the criminal. It belongs to the state as a matter of inherent right.

The real question is, whether war is one of those essential rights and powers of the state.

The question is in reality a double one; namely, Is war ever an essential right of the state, and must it be forever and necessarily a function of the state?

In answering these questions, several considerations must be kept in mind.

The first is that the state itself exists as a power superior to and taking cognizance of the relations of individuals; so in all matters of conflict and dispute between individuals, the state exists to adjust these relations and to insure the establishment of justice.

Hence all disputes and conflicts of interest between individuals which cannot be adjusted by private means and the application of the Christian spirit may find their proper adjustment through the organized life of the state.

But it is easy to see that no such larger and all-inclusive power exists with relation to states themselves. This means that while a great many minor matters of difference and dispute may easily be settled by conference and adjudication, in the larger matters which affect the essential life and well-being of the state itself there has hitherto been no possible arbitrament but that of reason and mutual concession, or failing that, the sword.

In this connection it is necessary to keep in mind the fact that so far at least in human history there have been bad states as well as good states. At best, the life of the state is imperfectly moralized; for while public opinion is something more than the sum of all the private opinions, nevertheless it is the product of private opinions, and waits upon the development of private character and judgment.

If we have not succeeded in perfectly moralizing the relation of individuals to each other, still less have we been able to apply the principles of justice to all the relations of the state-person.

This being the case, it is inevitable that conflicts of interest should sometimes arise even between comparatively good states — conflicts touching interests so fundamental that no adjustment has hitherto been possible save through the appeal to the sword. Under such circumstances, to deny the right and justice of warfare is simply to shut one's eyes to real life and to try to live in an impossible world of dreams.

This is, of course, more plainly evident in the case of a conflict between a good state and a bad. Outside of the closet no one has ever denied the right of a peaceful and well-behaved people to defend themselves against an incursion of savages; and the right of any nation to defend itself against aggressions which would destroy the liberty of its people is equally well established.

What is needed at this point is to face frankly the demands of common sense, and to rid ourselves of the uneasy feeling that this right somehow conflicts with the Christian ideal.

That it represents a state of affairs that falls short of the ultimate standard set by Jesus Christ for the life of men and nations there can be doubt; but defensive warfare, war in defense not only of national life and liberty but sometimes, it may be, even in defense of national ideals, is not only the right, but the duty of nations in a world so imperfectly moralized as this one in which we live.

When once we have plainly seen this truth, that the State-Person, in pursuance of its supreme ends, in protecting and developing the welfare of its people, is charged with a right and a responsibility which does not exist as between individuals, we begin to see how it may be that a Christian may love his neighbor as himself and stand ready to apply the principles of sacrifice and forbearance to the utmost degree in his personal relationships, and still consistently obey the call of his country to take up arms.

The definition of war as one little girl's papa going out to murder some other little

girl's papa is nothing but sentimental bosh. When the welfare of the whole people is involved or a great principle is at stake, the individual ceases to exist as an individual and becomes only a cell in the body politic. His acts in this relation are no longer the acts of an individual.

War is not legalized murder, but it is, or at least may be, the endeavor to defend the right and to attain the largest social well-being; and even though it may be undertaken in a mistaken cause, it is still justified so far in the experience of humanity as the only known means whereby certain supreme ends of human existence could hitherto be attained.

It is only on this ground that we can understand and appreciate the undoubted influences for good which have resulted from war.

War demands the supreme sacrifice of the individual to the common weal.

Hence in spite of all the suffering and heart-break involved, and in spite of the degrading and brutalizing influences which inevitably

accompany it, war has a remarkable power to heighten the moral tone of the community and to purify and ennoble the common life. No one can observe the seriousness and moral earnestness which characterizes the people of Europe in the present struggle without feeling that even this dreadful sacrifice may prove to be not too great a price to pay for such ennobling of humanity.

It is undoubtedly true that wars have frequently had a remarkable effect on civilization.

The Crusades, for example, broke down the tyranny of church and state, enlarged the boundaries of human thought, and marked the beginning of the modern period with its immeasurable developments of political and intellectual freedom.

The French Revolution, with all its excesses, re-created the French nation. The Franco-Prussian War, brought about as it was by the intrigues of Bismarck and carried out with bitter and needless severity, nevertheless hammered the German people into unity and created the German consciousness; and its

effect upon France was in many respects no less beneficial.

The American Revolution did almost as much for democracy in England as in America, and the Civil War not only destroyed slavery, but was followed by an unparalleled industrial and intellectual expansion of both the North and the South.

The recognition of this principle also explains and justifies the place held in history by the great struggles for liberty. The world would be infinitely poorer without the story of Thermopylæ and Marathon, of Lepanto and Liège.

Who shall dare to say that the characters of Leonidas and William Wallace and Arnold von Winkelried, of Gustavus Adolphus and Cromwell, of Washington and Grant, of Stonewall Jackson and Robert E. Lee are not among the noblest in the history of mankind; knightly souls, as truly and loyally Christian as St. Francis or Thomas à Kempis or William Booth?

III

But now, having recognized the worth and significance of human history and human instinct, and the place which war has actually held as an instrument of God for the working out of His own great ends in the experience of the race, let us make haste to see the more excellent way foreshadowed in the Christian ideal.

There is certainly no doubt, despite General von Bernhardi, that the Christian principles of consideration for others, of forbearance and self-control, and even of self-sacrifice, are capable of being applied in the relation of nations no less than in individuals.

They have been illustrated many times in the history of Europe during the past few hundred years, even if it be true that sometimes nations have maintained the attitude of forbearance for their own ends and as a cloak to their ulterior designs. Even such concessions bear eloquent witness to the possibility of a Christian policy.

The forbearance of England in the Venezuelan case, of Canada in the Fisheries dispute, and of the United States toward Mexico are all instances in point.

Many important and vital questions have arisen in a hundred years between Great Britain and the United States, and more than once relations have been so strained that a single spark might have produced an explosion. Nevertheless, the resolute purpose of the national leaders to find some way for the peaceful solution of the difficulties has never failed to bear fruit, and only the conflagration which broke out last year in Europe overshadowed one of the most significant events in human history, — the celebration of our hundred years of peace.

Europe sneered at our pretense of disinterestedness when we invaded Cuba, and again when we intervened a second time to restore order; but we have proven our faith by our works.

With all her history of militarism and conquest, and with all the wealth England has

undoubtedly received from her colonies, history will bear witness to the fact that wherever she has gone she has taken up the white man's burden, and that the nations she has ruled are the greatest beneficiaries of her policy.

Above all, who shall say that Belgium has not in these last days afforded a supreme example of national self-sacrifice; and has disproven von Bernhardi's doctrine by taking thereby a loftier place on the scroll of fame than she could ever have achieved by the prosperous discharge of the usual functions of the state.

If we ask how this ideal of the Christianizing of world-relations is to be attained, there is no better answer than that of Kant, whose essay on "Perpetual Peace" remains after the lapse of a hundred years the profoundest utterance which has yet been made on this theme.

Kant declared three things to be essential to a lasting world-peace — a peace which should be anything more than a temporary

intermission in a state of perpetual warfare. The first is "Representative Government"; the second is "The Political Organization of the World"; and the third is "The Spirit of Hospitality."

By representative government Kant really meant what we have in mind when we talk of Democracy.

Thoroughgoing democracy, or the direct exercise of the functions of government by the whole people, he did not believe in. He recognized the danger of the mob-spirit in government, the necessity which was embodied in the American Constitution of affording some check upon popular impulse. He knew that the tyranny of majorities may be as oppressive as that of an autocracy. He had no idea of intrusting the delicate adjustment of foreign relations to the clumsy devices of popular government.

But he recognized no less that in the last analysis the people do the fighting and pay the bills. He felt that their best instincts are to be trusted, and that in the long run

they are more likely to do what is just and right than an irresponsible bureaucracy intent on furthering its own ambitions. So he insisted that governments must be responsible to the people and truly representative of the best public sentiment of the nation if international relations are to be established on a sound basis.

This of necessity carries with it the abolition of secret diplomacy. Not that a wise discretion must not be allowed to the agents of the government in the conduct of diplomatic negotiations; but secret treaties and unacknowledged "gentlemen's agreements" between foreign offices are a fruitful source of suspicion and distrust, and the intrigues of far-sighted diplomats have more than once plunged nations into needless strife.

Only when the relation between states is regarded as a matter of public concern to be settled in the open, with all the cards on the table, can the people be assured that their true interests are being served.

The wisest students of public affairs are

agreed that this is not the least important lesson to be learned from the present conflict in Europe, and that only by increasing the responsibility of the governments to the popular conscience and will can the foundations be laid for a lasting peace.

Kant's second maxim finds expression to-day in the various schemes which are proposed for an international tribunal for the settlement of disputes, — with or without an armed power to enforce its decrees.

We have already seen the necessity for this. Hitherto there has been no court of last resort, such as the state itself affords for its citizens in their disputes, save that of the sword.

Kant was emphatically opposed to a "world-state," as destroying the sovereignty which is the very life of every state; but he saw as clearly as any one the necessity for some sort of machinery for the peaceful adjustment of international relations. Conflicts of interest are bound to arise. Justice must be assured and the interests of neutral states, the "innocent bystanders," must be safeguarded.

Since Kant's time two types of federated government have been worked out in human experience.

The American Union, which in his day had not emerged from the experimental state, is an actual government, a super-sovereignty over sovereign states, such as Kant himself opposed.

It is becoming increasingly evident in the United States that under the conditions of modern life the tendency in such a federation is for the sovereignty of the individual states to be more and more absorbed in the power of the central government. The Civil War proved that the Union is no mechanical mixture but an organic unity, and the tendency of the last twenty years has been to increase the centralized authority of the Federal Government. Nevertheless the people at large are fairly satisfied to have it so, and the interests of all are in the main pretty thoroughly safeguarded.

But the Civil War also proves that such a league of peace may break down under the stress of peculiar circumstances, and it may

well be that while it works admirably in the case of a homogeneous people it would not be adapted to the case of nations so diverse in language and customs and interests as the peoples of the old world.

The other type of a federated government is to be found in the British Empire.

Here the central government exercises but the remotest shadow of authority. Canada and Australia and South Africa are to all intents and purposes independent nations, exercising all the rights of sovereignty, including those of setting up tariff barriers and coining their own money, — powers forbidden to the American states.

To the casual observer the bond which holds the British Empire together is a rope of sand, and the greatest surprise of the present war to Germany was the fact the colonies remained loyal to the mother country and furnished troops and munitions of war in the crisis. Even yet German statesmen can scarcely be convinced that if the struggle should be prolonged, Canada or India would

not get out from under the burden and leave the Empire to her fate.

As a matter of fact nothing holds the British Empire together but sentiment. If England should attempt to exercise a real authority over her colonies, she would lose them in a day, — as no one knows better than England herself. She learned her lesson in 1776, and is not likely to make the same mistake again.

But the very weakness of the empire is its strength. The one thing that statesmen are slowest to learn is that sentiment is the mightiest factor in human affairs. The British Empire is nothing in the world but an Arbitration League between great states, who for the sake of sentiment have agreed that they will not go to war with each other under any circumstances, but will find some way of adjusting their mutual interest at all costs.

This suggests that after all the most important of Kant's maxims is the third; namely, that of "Hospitality." It is for this reason

that we have ventured to introduce this discussion of method into a study of essential Christianity; for this is nothing less than the application of Christian principles to international affairs.

What Kant meant by "hospitality" is that nations must learn to rid themselves of race hatred and suspicion; that they must come to trust each other, and to subordinate their selfish impulses in the interest of peace and mutual welfare.

As a matter of fact there are no irreconcilable interests between civilized states. France and England are hereditary enemies. They have fought each other from Crécy to Waterloo. Yet to-day they are fighting side by side. It is not many years since Kipling wrote,

> "Make ye no truce with Adam-Zad,
> The Bear that walks like a man."

Russia was at that time regarded as England's most dangerous rival, both in the Near and the Far East. The Crimean War was fought to prevent her from securing Constantinople.

Now England sees no objection to such an event. All these traditional difficulties have been adjusted, and Germany has become the *bête noire* in the path of world-peace. To-morrow may witness a new alignment.

When men have come to see the absurdity of all this, and have realized the essential solidarity of human interests in a world as compact and genuinely organic as this we live in has come to be, then we shall begin to apply the Christian principles of forbearance and mutual good will to international affairs, and the swords will be beaten into plowshares.

It is evident that this Christianizing of national life, of the State-Person in its relations with its peers, must be a fruit of the growing Christianization of public opinion.

As individuals grow more Christian in their relations with each other, and their moral insight becomes correspondingly quickened, the field of international relations must inevitably be brought more and more under the dominion of the Christian ideal.

It is doubtless a far cry to the consummation of this hope; but as the spirit of Jesus Christ takes an ever deeper hold on the hearts of men, they will not forever be content with war's crude and wasteful method of attaining international justice, but will strive more and more for a common understanding and mutual good will among the nations of the earth.

It is objected to this hope that the warlike virtues of courage and self-sacrifice are among the greatest treasures of the human spirit, and that the abolition of war will reduce mankind to the flabby bourgeois virtues of prosperity and ease.

The answer is found in all the glorious history of spiritual sacrifice. The sisters of charity who spend their lives in the service of the poor; the humble missionaries who pour out their souls without stint in behalf of the needy inhabitants of the dark places of the world; the martyrs of science, the heroes of industry, and the innumerable multitude of

earnest spirits in every age who count not their lives dear unto themselves that they may be of service to their fellow men and establish the kingdom of righteousness unto the ends of the earth, are sufficient witness to the spiritual resources of the race.

While the earth stands there will never be a time when men will not be called upon to sacrifice themselves for righteousness' sake. The Cross will not die out of human experience, nor need we fear that it will ever become an easy thing in this world to do right.

The physical heroism which faces death at the cannon's mouth makes a far less demand upon the resources of the human soul than the spiritual courage required of him who will follow Jesus Christ in a world of sin and spiritual conflict.

"Peace? When have we prayed for peace?
Is there no wrong to right?
Wrong crying to God on high
Here where the weak and the helpless die,
And the homeless hordes of the city go by,
The ranks are rallied to-night!

"Peace? When have we prayed for peace?
Are ye so dazed with words?
Earth, heaven shall pass away
Ere for your passionless peace we pray!
Are ye deaf to the trumpets that call us to-day,
Blind to the blazing swords?"

— Alfred Noyes.

IV

THE CHRISTIAN AND WEALTH

The problem of war holds the central place in all our thinking just now by reason of the terrible holocaust which has overtaken Europe, but it is not the most fundamental ethical problem of mankind.

The root cause of war is undoubtedly the desire of the strong to exploit the weak. Indeed a recent German economist and historian goes so far as to say that the political organization of mankind into states had its rise historically in the desire of a vigorous and predatory group to take possession of the products of toil of a weaker or less aggressive people.

The fundamental problem of human civilization is that of the production and distribution of goods. If Christianity is to afford the constructive principles upon which the

highest human welfare must rest, it is necessary for us to ask what Christianity has to say on the economic problem.

Practically the question assumes this form, Can a Christian hold wealth? or to state the question more broadly, Is Christianity compatible with a social order in which men are divided into rich and poor?

Here again we are met at the outset with a confusion of tongues, evidencing a very general confusion of thought.

On the one hand, there are those who declare that Jesus was a Socialist; that he believed in the abolition of private property, or even that he would have all things held in common; that his doctrine forbids every form and degree of wealth and enjoins absolute poverty and the refusal to make provision for the future.

On the other hand, there are those who argue that the institution of private property is so embedded in his teaching that his whole ethical system falls to the ground if the economic structure of society should be materially changed.

If we turn from attempts to interpret the teaching of Jesus in a thoroughgoing way and look at the spontaneous practical attitude of men toward that teaching, we find the same confusion.

On the one hand, there is a widespread feeling that riches are incompatible with Christianity, and that the church has betrayed her Lord by the deference she has paid to wealth and power; on the other hand, there are a great number of well-to-do and rich in the church who are conscious of no inconsistency between their religion and their business life.

On the one hand, St. Francis of Assisi is held up as the typical Christian. On the other hand, Mr. Rockefeller is admired as the type of a successful combination of business efficiency and spiritual character.

I

Again we turn to the teaching of Jesus to see if it affords any clear light upon this crucial problem of human life.

Once more we find the same apparent contradiction when we undertake to interpret him literally.

The Sermon on the Mount declares that no man can serve God and Mammon, and bids men lay up their treasures in heaven rather than on earth. It tells them to take no thought for the morrow, but to live as the birds who have neither storehouse nor barn.

When the rich young ruler came to Jesus declaring that he had kept the commandments from his youth up and asking what further duty was laid upon him that he might enter the Kingdom of God, Jesus told him to sell all that he had and give to the poor.

He declared that it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God; and this needle's eye was not a hypothetical door in the wall of Jerusalem so small that camels could get through only by being stripped of their packs and getting down on their knees. This gate existed only in the imagination of commentators who wanted

to save the literal interpretation of Jesus's words and still leave some loophole for their rich patrons. Jesus meant a needle's eye, and the form of the statement declares the utter impossibility of a rich man being saved.

Jesus's own practice conformed to this teaching. He held no property; he depended for his living on the generosity of his disciples, and the little group who traveled with him had a common purse and lived from hand to mouth.

The church at Jerusalem after his death apparently followed the same principle. Its members sold their property and turned the proceeds into the common treasury. They gave themselves up to the service of worship and praise and the proclamation of the Christian truth, and took no thought for business.

So far the case seems to be clear for the absolute demand for poverty if one will be a loyal follower of Jesus.

But, on the other hand, Jesus accepted the proposition of Zacchæus to give half of his goods to the poor and to restore fourfold to any man whom he had wronged.

When Nicodemus came to inquire the way of life, Jesus said not a single word about his property, but simply told him he would have to have a new spirit and attitude toward life if he would enter the Kingdom of God.

The Apostles themselves left their homes to become companions of Jesus; but they did not surrender their property, and after the resurrection Peter and his friends went back to their fishing nets until the new call sent them out to spend their lives in proclaiming the gospel.

The little family at Bethany whose friendship meant so much to Jesus seem to have been in comfortable circumstances; and one of Jesus's friends at least had a house in Jerusalem much larger than the majority of the houses, since it had an upper room furnished where the Master might eat the Passover with his Disciples.

Even during the communistic period of the early church in Jerusalem, as we have seen, there was no requirement that its mem-

bers should sell their property for the common fund; and Ananias and Sapphira were punished not for keeping back part of their wealth, but for pretending they had given all when they had not. Outside of Jerusalem there is no trace of the practice of communism; and after the first few years the Jerusalem saints, having given up all their property, became a perpetual burden upon the other churches throughout the Empire and were supported by collections taken in Rome and Macedonia.

In point of fact we find here, as we have found before, that there is no hope in literalism; that the demands of Jesus are not susceptible of being reduced to simple, hard and fast rules which draw a sharp line of demarcation through human life, on the one side of which lies duty and on the other side disaster.

In some instances, his requirement was due to the peculiarities of an individual case; to some extent, it was governed by the general conditions of the age in which he lived; to

some extent, he employed in this connection the same method of paradox which we found so arresting and thought-compelling in other directions.

St. Francis of Assisi accepted literally the injunction of Jesus to sell all and give to the poor. The policy did not prove successful or capable of wide application in St. Francis's own experience, and as a matter of fact, we honor him for the sweetness of his spirit, for the greatness of his love, and for his unshrinking loyalty to the truth as he understood it, rather than for his specific example in this connection.

Origen of Alexandria in the third century carried out literally the suggestion of Jesus that some men are called to become eunuchs for the Kingdom of God; but the good sense of the church has even from his own day repudiated such extreme measures, and has believed that the practice of celibacy fulfilled the most extreme requirement in the mind of Jesus. If this saying is to be interpreted by common sense and Origen was

wrong in his interpretation though splendidly loyal in his obedience, it is possible that the same is true of St. Francis.

It is true that Jesus was not an economist. He was not concerned with the problems of statecraft or of business, with laying down the scientific laws which govern the economic realm. He refused to be a judge or divider. When appealed to regarding the lawfulness of paying tribute to Cæsar, he simply told the Jews that so long as they accepted Cæsar's money, they were under obligations to Cæsar. He refused to discuss the political principle, but made clear the moral obligation.

There can be no doubt that the ethical principles of Jesus are susceptible of wide application in the political and no less in the economic field, but we are left to discover for ourselves what those applications may be. Broadly speaking, anything which in the long run is true statecraft is Christian, and will be found to rest upon the ethical principles laid down by Christ. In like manner, anything which proves ultimately to be sound

economic practice cannot be inconsistent with the Christian teaching.

But the discovery and application of the Christian principle to the economic field is to be made not through slavish submission to the letter either of Jesus's teaching or his practice; but by the broad understanding of his moral purpose in the light of experience.

II

Turning, therefore, from the attempt to find in the words of Jesus a clear and well-defined rule for Christian practice, and applying once more our principle of sanctified common sense to the interpretation of his teaching, we find a good many things which throw light on our problem and which suggest certain general principles which if carried out in human life would lead the world in the direction of a stable social order.

To begin with, there are a number of things in the practice and teaching of Jesus which bear directly on the problem of wealth.

In the first place, Jesus displayed, both in his practice and in his teaching, a virtual indifference to wealth. He tried to make men see that there are so many things of greater importance that it is a waste of life to spend it upon the acquisition of property. The pursuit of truth, the building of character, the practice of the spirit of helpfulness, — these are the aims which should absorb the soul and which leave small room for greed.

Agassiz, the great American naturalist, was once offered $700 a night for a course of lectures; but he replied, "I haven't time to make money," and he kept on teaching natural science to undergraduates for a small salary, too absorbed in the discovery and proclamation of truth to care whether he made money or not.

John Wesley was no ascetic and had little in common with St. Francis, but when the taxgatherer, supposing that so famous a man as Mr. Wesley must be living in corresponding style, wrote to him to say that he had not made return of his silver plate, Mr.

Wesley replied, "I had overlooked the matter; I have two silver spoons, — one in London and one in Bristol; that is all the silver plate I expect to possess while so many in England are starving for bread."

This is the working of the spirit of Jesus in human life.

In the next place, Jesus plainly recognized and declared the snare of riches.

He saw how luxury and ease tend to undermine the moral character and to unfit men for strenuous moral effort. He knew how easy it is for mankind to become the slaves instead of the masters of their possessions; to become so entangled with *things* that they are no longer masters of themselves or of the conditions of their life. He knew that wealth breeds power, and power tends to make men hard and tyrannical. It was for this reason that he was continually warning men against the snare of wealth. It is the care of the world and the deceitfulness of riches that choke the word of truth and make it unfruitful. It is the worship of

Mammon which crowds God out of the human heart.

One of the most heart-gripping of the parables of Jesus is the story of that man whose wealth accumulated till he knew not what to do with it, and he said, "I will build larger storehouses and there I will bestow this great wealth, and I will say to my soul, 'Thou hast much goods laid up for many years — take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry,'" and God said unto him, "Thou fool!"

King Midas was gifted with the power to turn everything he touched into gold, and his heart rejoiced, but the reeds by the riverside whispered, "King Midas has ass's ears"; for the rose he plucked, the wine he drank, the lips of the child he kissed all turned to gold, and the king realized the utter folly that mistakes the true riches and seeks only material gain.

Moreover, Jesus emphatically taught the necessity of getting rid of anything in life which has become a snare of the soul. Better be blind and maimed than to be led by sight

and touch into actions which destroy the soul. Better far that a man be poor and engaged in a daily struggle for existence than that his soul should be degraded into a money-bag and his whole life grow flabby and monstrous, lapped around with luxury.

Also the general principles of Jesus, his supreme doctrines of love and service, have an important bearing on the problem of wealth.

In the first place, they demand the loftiest integrity.

It does not require a wide experience of life to realize that absolute and unflinching honesty is not often the pathway to great wealth. We do not mean that all riches are dishonestly acquired, but the investigations and revelations of the last few years in America, and the perpetual struggle against graft and chicane in which we are engaged, give ground for the suspicion that most wealth is tainted money.

We may not go as far as Oppenheimer, the

historian to whom we referred, who declares that the state itself had its origin in the desire to get something for nothing and to enjoy the possession of wealth earned by the labor of others; but there is a growing feeling on the part of all sober and intelligent students of human life that if the principles of absolute integrity were applied to the business world, it would cut deep into our great fortunes and insure a much wider distribution of the products of industry.

Jesus also insists that the ruling principle in life must be that of service.

Economically, this means that the emphasis in business must be not upon profits but upon the service of human need.

Whether an element of profit is necessary in order to make business possible is a question for economics to settle, but it is undoubtedly true that hitherto the accent has been on the wrong syllable. Business has been conducted for profit, and the service was incidental. The tendency, therefore, has been to increase the profit to the largest de-

gree which the traffic will bear, and to reduce the service to the minimum which the public will stand.

The change of emphasis which is being insisted upon by the growing demand of public sentiment in its relation to all the business of the world is directly in line with the Christian principle.

The law of love must further be applied to the whole field of the production of wealth.

Men have been very slow to realize this truth. Human slavery persisted for eighteen centuries after Christ, and it is but little more than fifty years since the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States declared that the black man had no rights which the white man was bound to respect. We are still prone to interpret business purely in the terms of economic cost and profit, and are slow to measure the human factors involved.

Of all the children in the United States between the ages of thirteen and sixteen, one in six is a wage earner, and there are whole industries in which the weight rests on the

That is an awful thing to say. These men have no right not to know the labor problem. They are directly responsible for the bodies and souls of millions of men, with their wives and children. If it is impossible for the bankers who control the industries of our day to understand and be responsible for the labor conditions under which their wealth is created, then the foundations are laid for the greatest revolution in human history. For in the name of humanity, society must wrest from these men the control of human industry in order that it may be administered intelligently in the interest of mankind.

The tyranny of six per cent must be overthrown. This world does not exist for the sake of wealth, but for the sake of folks; and it is an intolerable thing that the control of human lives should be vested in young men who have no interest in or knowledge of the fundamental human problem.

Finally, the law of love and service governs the use that shall be made of one's wealth.

All men are trustees of society for their possessions.

The world has made great progress in this direction in the last hundred years. It has come to pass that multi-millionaires maintain toward the world a somewhat apologetic attitude, as though they were half-ashamed of their wealth. Mr. Carnegie declared a few years ago that it is a disgrace for a man to die rich, and he has been exhausting his ingenuity in devising methods of disposing of his wealth in ways that shall be most useful to mankind. It was said the other day that the benefactions of Mr. Rockefeller have amounted to a quarter of a billion; and the most miserly business man of the last generation, Russell Sage, left at his death his entire fortune to be distributed for the public good.

We do not always realize, however, that the principle holds good for the man whose wealth is counted in hundreds or thousands no less than for him whose fortune numbers millions. Whatever we have, we have not for

ourselves, to employ for selfish ends; but we hold it in trust for our neighbor.

III

In all this we have been anticipating the application of the principles of Jesus to the conditions of modern life.

If the law of integrity must be expanded into a recognition of the right of labor to a larger share in the profits and the right of the public to more efficient service; and if the law of love must be held to govern the production of wealth no less than its use, then Christianity is bound to cut deep into the historic social order.

Christianity plainly sets itself in opposition to the economic interpretation of life.

It insists that not the production of wealth is the chief aim nor the ruling motive in human history, but the production of manhood, — however important the economic factor may have been, and however necessary it may be to take it into account in any attempt either to explain the past or to control the future.

The economic life is concerned only with producing the material for living. Christianity is the assertion of the supremacy of the spirit over the flesh, of manhood over material possessions.

It protests against the tyranny of things. It bids men free themselves from the entanglement of worldly possessions; to be too great of soul and too high of purpose to go forever bound to the satisfaction of their physical wants. It is better that a man should know truth and feed his soul on beauty and stretch himself in aspiration after unattainable ideals than that he should be a well-fed and pampered animal, forever in bondage to food and clothing and his physical body.

In particular Christianity sets itself in opposition to luxury and self-indulgence. It protests against the senseless extravagance which spends its life in mere social display and misses all the worth-while ends of human existence. Monkey dinners at Newport, balls at which the refreshments cost hundreds of dollars per plate, and all of that

sort of thing, stand forever condemned by the simple appeal of Christianity for moral heroism and spiritual worth.

Thus Christianity recognizes the necessity of adjusting oneself to existing social and economic conditions, and lays down principles by which men are to be governed under all conditions.

If the Christian man is born to the possession of wealth, Christianity does not require him of necessity to rid himself of his wealth; but it bids him be bigger than his money, to refuse to become a slave to it, to maintain his spiritual life and freedom in spite of it, to regard it as a means rather than as an end in itself, and to use it not for selfish indulgence but for the service of his fellow men.

If the Christian man finds himself in a social order where the exercise of his gifts of mind and heart lead to the possession of wealth, Christianity has no word of condemnation for him; but bids him maintain his integrity, to sacrifice his economic interests

unhesitatingly whenever they come in conflict with the demands of the soul, to put the largest possible degree of Christian consideration and brotherhood into his business life, and to employ the wealth which he has thus acquired in whatever way shall contribute most to the well-being of humanity.

But when all this is said, it remains true that the application of the teaching of Jesus even in its broadest principles to the economic life of the world tends utterly to transform it, to change its emphasis from economic success to human service.

There is reason to believe that when this influence has had its perfect work, the result will be a transformation of the economic life of man as thoroughgoing and complete as has already been brought about in the political world in the transition from a centralized imperial authority to democracy.

If Christianity requires that human costs be considered as of paramount importance in the production of wealth, if it insists no less upon absolute justice in the distribution

of the products of industry, if it enthrones human values in all the relations of men with each other, it means sooner or later the abolition of poverty and no less the abolition of great wealth.

Christianity does not mean the mechanical leveling of human society. It recognizes diversities of gifts and capacities, and it is entirely compatible with a distribution of wealth which is proportionate to the varying contributions men make to the world's life by reason of this human diversity. None the less a world thoroughly Christianized will be a world which no longer rests the weight of the social structure upon the mud-sills of economic slavery and degradation.

It is the ultimate aim of Christianity to create a social order in which the weakest and humblest shall have a fair opportunity to develop his powers and capacities in the free exercise of such gifts of mind and heart as God has given him; a world in which there shall no longer be a few who are oppressed by their own luxury, degraded by idleness and

self-indulgence, and a great multitude whose lives are dwarfed and crippled by lack of the necessities of life; but in which the laws of justice and brotherhood shall have so equalized human conditions as to make it possible for every human being to stand erect, a free man, and to devote himself freely to the service of God.

V

THE CHRISTIAN IDEAL

War and wealth are the two most serious problems in human society, and a study of the relation of Christianity to these involves, as we have seen, a fairly comprehensive survey of the whole field of Christian ethics.

It is desirable, however, to sum up the Christian ideal a little more completely and systematically.

We have seen what were the main outlines of the ethical teachings of Jesus.

We approach the matter now from the other side and endeavor to sum up the net impression of Christianity upon the thought of mankind.

In the light of everything that Jesus taught, and in the light as well of nineteen centuries of Christian teaching and influence, what kind of man is to be regarded as a perfect Christian?

I

Before we take this question up in detail, however, one very important observation must be made.

We have been discussing Christianity up to this point entirely from the point of view of theory; first, its philosophical theory, its interpretation of life, and second, its ethical theory, the demand it makes upon life.

But Christianity is not primarily a theory; it is an experience. Christianity is a life. It had its beginning in the experience of friendship and daily association with Jesus. It persisted after his death because of the spiritual experience of the early disciples, growing out of their relation to him.

It has endured through nineteen centuries because of its spiritual vitality, because of its dynamic quickening of the emotional life, inspiring the hearts of men with courage and zeal, enlarging and transforming their lives and creating within them the ideals we have sought to describe.

It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of this distinction. The world has had many ethical theories. What it has lacked is a moral dynamic.

Lecky, the English historian, in a well-known passage pointed out the utter failure of the lofty stoical ideal to exert any real influence upon human conduct, and declared that it was reserved for Christianity to present to mankind in the character of Jesus a personality so winsome and powerful that the brief record of his active life has done more to soften and regenerate mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and moralists.

Life always comes before theory, in point of time. Men ate for thousands of years before they reasoned out the science of physiology. They enjoyed roses and violets long before they elaborated the science of botany.

So they loved and hated, they lived together in communities and nations, and sought to work out in practical experience the problem of human relations, long before any system-

atic attempt was made to construct a theory of the ethical life.

The same principle is equally true in the religious realm. Men did not first construct a theological interpretation of the universe and then endeavor to experience their theology. They experienced emotions of wonder and awe, of reverence and worship, and constructed their religious theories to interpret the experience.

Christianity builds upon the foundation of universal human experience. Mankind is incurably religious. Among the Jewish people this religious impulse reached its highest development and expressed itself in the purest form.

Jesus Christ coming into the midst of the religious life of Judaism simply purified and vivified the religious ideals of his race, and raised the religious emotions of his followers to the height of a spiritual passion which became a life-giving, fructifying influence in the world, having power to reproduce itself in the lives of others with whom the first disciples came in contact.

Christian theology is nothing in the world but an attempt to rationalize that experience, to explain and interpret it. Christian ethics is but the attempt to express in a complete and systematic fashion the ways in which the Christian impulses find normal expression in human life.

A mere philosophical and ethical theory would have been superseded long ago. Christianity has survived the centuries because of this living experience which has knit the generations together in a continuity of life and feeling.

Paul and Peter had little in common on the intellectual side. They were made blood-brothers by their common devotion to their Master, and their common experience of heightened religious feeling and quickened ethical purpose which grew out of it.

The theology of Justin Martyr and Origen, of St. Augustine and St. Francis, of Thomas Aquinas and John Calvin differs not only in many particulars, but also not infrequently in fundamental principles; but they are all

sharers of a common spiritual experience. They have all drunk from this stream of warm spiritual emotion and dynamic moral purpose which has flowed through human history from the personality of Jesus.

The critics of Christianity have seldom given adequate consideration to this vital fact.

They have addressed themselves to a discussion of Christian theory, and have never been at a loss to find gaps and flaws in it, whereupon they consider that they have done away with Christianity. They forget that life is the fact, and theory but the interpretation of the fact. No man's digestion was ever directly affected by the limitations of his knowledge of physiology.

Brudder Jasper, the darky preacher of Richmond, had a famous sermon on "The sun do move." He saw it in the morning on one side of the house and in the afternoon on the other. The house hadn't moved, hence the sun must have moved. We smile at Brother Jasper's logic, but we set our watches by the sun as well as he.

The Christian Scientist who believes that matter is an illusion, and the materialist who denies all spiritual existence, both build their houses out of brick and mortar.

To have a mistaken theory is unfortunate, but to ignore facts is tragic. The life of Christianity is the most significant fact in the history of the last nineteen centuries, and the one most commonly ignored by historians.

The central thing in Christianity, viewed as life rather than theory, is its experience of God.

The Christian believer has experienced an emotional exaltation so unique and powerful that it seems nothing less than the immediate contact of the soul with the divine. It carries with it the quickening of his spiritual impulses, the purifying of his moral insight, the strengthening of all his loftier ethical purposes. It makes him a wiser, stronger, better man. It implants within him a spirit of good will which impels him to spend himself in the service of his fellow men.

This spiritual experience is not at all times equally vivid and powerful, nor does it seize upon all individuals in the same way or to the same degree. It is subject to all the psychological laws which govern the emotional experiences of mankind in every department of life.

The love of a mother for her babe, of a son for his mother, of husbands and wives, is not always equally vivid. The impulses which are set in motion in moments of strong feeling are taken up by the moral will and purpose and carried out in everyday life under all its fluctuations of emotional intensity; but these warm human emotions are what make human life the rich and colorful and beautiful thing it is, and so it is this deep undercurrent of spiritual emotion which constitutes vital Christianity.

From this point of view a Christian is one who shares the Christian emotion and experience. His theological interpretation of it may be faulty, his answer to the ethical demand of Jesus may be imperfect; but because his life has been touched by the

power of the Christian spirit he is more truly a Christian than many another whose theological theories and ethical ideals may be perfect, but who has never connected his theories with life.

The greatest word in Christian speech is love. Jesus himself summed up the whole meaning of life in the command, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself." That man is a Christian whose life is moved in any degree by that spirit; and he is Christian to the degree to which he is impelled and controlled by it.

II

We come now to ask in the light of all we have learned of the teaching of Jesus and of the essential nature of the Christian experience, what kind of man a perfect Christian would be. What is the Christian ideal for the personal life? How will the vital experience in the soul of a perfect Christian express itself in actual life?

If our understanding of the spirit and pur-

pose of Jesus is correct, such a man will not be an ascetic, a bloodless and anæmic recluse, living in retirement and spending his life in meditation and devotion. He will not find it necessary to withdraw himself from the normal life of mankind or to wear himself out in a fruitless struggle against the normal impulses of life. Such a man will not be morbidly introspective, forever engaged in feeling his own spiritual pulse or pulling his spiritual experience up by the roots to see whether it is growing.

Nor, on the other hand, is it at all certain that such a man will of necessity be a radical reformer, a wielder of the big stick against all the wrongs and failures of human society. There will doubtless be times when he will be called upon to strike mighty blows against wrong and oppression, but there could be no greater mistake than to suppose that only the ascetic on the one hand and the reformer on the other are to be regarded as the typical Christian.

Asceticism is a false and morbid ideal, born

in part of pagan philosophy and in part of a mistaken devotion to the letter of a few of Jesus's sayings. Spirited and aggressive reform has often been the product of the Christian motive, but it is a tool to accomplish certain results, one which can only be applied under certain conditions and must always be wielded with self-restraint and wisdom. The reformer ought to be a Christian and the Christian must sometimes be a reformer, but the Christian ideal is much larger than this, and must not be confused with the narrower purpose and more limited function of reform.

If we should undertake to describe a perfect Christian life on the positive side, I think we should say that it would be characterized, first of all, by the recognition of spiritual forces and relations. It would be a deeply religious life in the sense, not of assiduous devotion to religious forms and practices, but of living continually under the stimulating consciousness of its spiritual heritage.

Its attitude toward God would not differ essentially from that of a splendid and loyal

and hard-working son who is a partner in his father's business, who finds in his father's friendship and comradeship a great joy and a powerful stimulus in carrying out the responsibilities of his daily life.

Such a Christian life as this would be great-souled. That is to say, it would not be moved by petty ends and mean motives. It would be incapable of being absorbed by trivial things.

The indictment which Christianity brings against so much of human life is that it is not worth while.

> "For a cap and bells our lives we pay,
> Bubbles we buy with a whole soul's tasking."

To pursue amusement and pleasure, social prestige, political ambition and business success as the chief things in life, is to betray a woeful lack of perspective; to get the whole center of gravity of life in the wrong place. It is not that any of these things are wrong in themselves, so that the Christian must withdraw from them and live as though they were not; but that they

should be mere incidents of a life devoted to higher ends.

The Christian is one who is engaged upon the great task of building a character worthy to endure beyond this brief experience; of establishing in the world the great ideals of purity and justice and truth; of helping his fellow men in their sorrows and struggles; of establishing the kingdom of righteousness and peace and joy in holiness of spirit.

To imagine that such an one ought to be too solemn to find pleasure in a jest, too serious to take any relaxation in play or pleasure, too conscious of life's tragedies ever to unbend from his stern devotion to the moral imperative, too absorbed in the contemplation of heaven to know or care anything about the affairs of this life, is utterly to misconceive the spirit and attitude of Jesus or the real demand of the Christian ideal.

A Christian is one who uses all these things merely as a means to a larger end, and so is everywhere master of himself and of the conditions of life instead of becoming a slave

to his impulses or to the circumstances in which he is placed.

Such a life will be characterized by the spirit of kindness and love.

Love is not sentimental gush nor easy-going tolerance — it is entirely compatible with strength and dignity, with resoluteness of purpose, with keen endeavor to accomplish the work of the world.

It simply means the spirit of modesty, of considerateness, of courtesy, of patience and forbearance; the recognition of other's rights, the set purpose to serve and please. It means unselfishness. It means a life measured not in terms of what one is going to get out of it but of how much one can put into it. It means a high moral earnestness, an unhesitating consecration of oneself to the good of mankind and the service of the kingdom of God.

Such a life is a life which will not shrink from sacrifice, which has learned to put first things first, and knows that nothing which life can give can ever make up to any man the

loss he sustains when he subordinates right to self-interest, or fails by reason of cowardice or indifference to be true to his own loftiest ideals.

III

When once the Christian ideal is interpreted in this broad and sincere fashion, an innumerable multitude of examples rush to mind.

One recent magazine writer convinced himself that the Christian church was a failure as soon as it was born, because it misapprehended its Master and sought to inculcate philosophy and win ecclesiastical power instead of allowing the religious impulse to run a perfectly free course in the world. Another is quite sure that there are no Christians left; that perhaps indeed there never have been any, — with the possible exception of St. Francis.

But when one looks frankly and simply at the history of Christianity, interpreting the Christian ideal in the light of ordinary good sense, though with a clear recognition of the lofty purity of its moral imperative, it becomes clear that while there has never been and can

never be a perfect Christian, a man whose life completely embodies and illustrates the whole significance of Christian love, nevertheless, from the days of the Apostles until now an innumerable multitude of whom the world was not worthy have borne witness to the power of the Christian motive and have handed down the torch of Christian light and life to succeeding generations.

St. Francis was indeed a Christian, not because of his poverty or his asceticism, but in virtue of his splendid loyalty to the truth as he understood it, and above all of the exhaustless tenderness of his love.

A very different type was Martin Luther, rugged, uncouth and simple, but he was no less a Christian when, in the light of the insight that any man might draw near to God in the simplicity of his own heart, without need of priest or mediator, he faced the emperor and the church with the noble words: "Here I stand; I can do no other, God help me!" Reformers whose zeal purified the state, established justice and advanced the cause of

liberty and democracy: Calvin at Geneva, John Knox in Scotland, Garrison and Wendell Phillips in America, were nobly Christian in their loyalty to justice and righteousness and their uncompromising opposition to oppression and wrong at all cost.

Lord Shaftesbury spent his whole life and fortune in self-sacrificing service of the poor and oppressed, and when he died, uncounted thousands of the common people followed his casket through the streets of London to its resting place in Westminster Abbey, while grimy newsboys, the tears marking white furrows down their cheeks, said one to another, "Our Earl is dead."

William Booth left the ministry of the Methodist church that he might give himself unreservedly to the service of the London slums.

Florence Nightingale faced death in the trenches of the Crimea to minister to the wounded and suffering.

The heart of David Livingstone is buried in the Africa he died to save, and on the slab

that covers his body in Westminster Abbey is inscribed his noble appeal to the Christian nations to heal the hurt of Africa, "the open sore of the world."

But not monks and reformers and philanthropists and missionaries alone have embodied the spirit of Jesus Christ.

Washington was a Christian when he stood in simple dignity for liberty and justice, and by his wisdom and integrity guided the infant republic to the establishment of a stable and just government. He was Christian when he put aside all thought of ambition and refused to allow the plot of his officers to offer him the crown so much as to come to a head.

Garibaldi was Christian when he struggled to liberate Italy from the cruel oppression of Austria and said to the young men of his country, "I promise you forced marches, short rations, bloody battles, wounds, imprisonment and death — let him who loves home and fatherland follow me!"

Abraham Lincoln was a Christian statesman when he freed the slaves, and when by

example no less than precept he taught his countrymen how to carry forward their great task "with malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gave them to see the right."

Who shall say that a soldier like Philip Sidney was not a Christian, who when he was dying on the field of battle gave the cup of water someone brought him to a wounded comrade with the words, "You need it more than I."

In St. Paul's Cathedral in London is a simple cenotaph erected to the memory of Chinese Gordon, who was murdered at Khartum. On it is this inscription: "To the memory of Charles George Gordon, who always and everywhere gave his strength to the weak, his substance to the poor, his sympathy to the suffering, and his heart to God."

These are the outstanding lives, the heroes of the faith. With them comes a great multitude which no man can number, who through great tribulation have maintained their loyalty to the spirit and purpose of their Master.

They all, from the least to the greatest, are fragmentary lives. They would have been the last to claim virtue for themselves, the first to confess that they were chief of sinners. As has been well said, Christianity is a flying goal. The ideal itself grows ever more lofty and perfect as our understanding broadens and deepens. We have this treasure in earthen vessels. It could not be otherwise in such a world as that in which we live.

To shut our eyes to actual conditions and spend ourselves in the pursuit of unreal and impossible fantasies is a waste of energy, and an utter failure to comprehend the spirit and purpose of the loftiest spiritual truth the world has yet received.

On the other hand, to fix our eyes on the weaknesses and faults of good men, and to deny the power and worth of the Christian ideal because it has hitherto found but imperfect fulfilment in any life, is idle folly.

The Christian ideal is that of a life marked by simple purity and integrity, and moved by great-hearted devotion to the service of God

and man. Such an ideal may be set aside when any of its critics can suggest one that is worthier or which has more power to command the devotion of men.

IV

The standards of personal character do not, however, exhaust the Christian ideal. It is true that the emphasis both in the teaching of Jesus and in the historic development of Christian ethics is upon the individual life, but it is always the individual in social relations.

The present generation has witnessed the greatest expansion in Christian thought since the Reformation, in the growing recognition of the social significance of Christianity.

It is a commonplace of present-day discussions that the solidarity of mankind has been very greatly enhanced by the developments of the last hundred years. Families, communities, and nations no longer live in isolation from each other, but the whole world is bound together in the most complex web of mutual interest and mutual dependence.

As a result the social obligations of men have been intensified. New definitions of sin have been made necessary, new applications of old ethical principles are revealed. The highwayman of the seventeenth century robbed his victim at the point of a pistol; his successor in our day organizes a blue-sky mining company, or sells building lots in the bottom of a ravine. Men formerly committed murder by knife or poison; to-day by selling impure milk or putting the price of ice beyond the reach of the poor.

All this has necessitated a broader interpretation of Christian ethics. A thousand new questions have arisen. What is the bearing of Christianity upon the duty of a working man in the matter of labor unions, or the question of the open shop? What has it to say to the holder of Standard Oil or Steel Trust stock?

The responsibility for injustice and wrong has become so widely distributed as to lose its weight upon the individual conscience. A few years ago the representative of one of the

popular magazines began investigating political graft in American municipal government. He began by considering the tribute exacted by the police department from the resorts of vice. This led on the one hand to the ownership of property, the existence of slums and tenements; and on the other hand to the influences which brought about the election of city officials. Presently he discovered that public service corporations were involved. More than once it happened that the men who financed a campaign against vice grew hostile when the investigation began to lay bare the wider ramifications of the evil of graft.

In the end the investigator summed up years of study by throwing the responsibility back upon the whole business organization, and — contrary to the maxim of Burke — indicted the whole people. The recent investigations of industrial conditions in Colorado have brought to light a similar shifting of responsibility.

The significance of all this for our discussion is to indicate that if Christianity is to have

any meaning for the modern world with its vast complex of social and industrial relations, its ethics must be interpreted in a broader way than ever before.

It is not enough to ask what is the duty of individuals in their direct personal contact with each other; but how the spirit of the Christian ethics can find embodiment in the whole web of the social order.

A little reflection shows, however, that no new principles are required. The application of the laws of love and service to the new conditions is the only thing which can purify modern life and destroy the abuses under which mankind is suffering to-day.

The social ideal of Christianity is that of a world bound together by mutual service; a world so organized that the power of evil men to exploit their weaker or less fortunate neighbors shall be reduced to a minimum; a world in which all discoverable injustices in the organization of society shall be eliminated.

If this results in lessening the profits which accrue to any social group, this only means

that hitherto this group has been getting more than its fair share of the product of toil.

A clear-eyed and courageous Christianity must insist that no man has discharged his full duty when he has applied the Christian spirit to his concrete personal relations; but that his conscience no less than his practical judgment must be socialized until he shall apply in all the multiplied activities of his business and political life the same fundamental principles which bid him sacrifice his own interests for the sake of his fellows, and shall do his part to establish justice and good will as the organic law of the social order.

It is worthy of note that when Jesus sought a single name by which to make known the total aim and purpose of his activity he found it in the Kingdom of God.

The chief good, the pearl of great price to purchase which it was fitting that a man should sell all that he had, was neither individual happiness nor individual salvation. It was the Kingdom of God, the redeemed and

glorified social order in which the will of God should inform and permeate every relation of the entire structure, so that the whole of humanity should be lifted up to the level of the perfect social ideal.

The glowing promises of the closing chapters of the Book of Revelation have to do not with a Paradise in some distant star, but with a City of God which cometh down from God out of Heaven, adorned as a bride for her husband, to make this world its permanent abiding place. Into it shall enter nothing that defileth or that loveth and maketh a lie; but they shall bring the honor and the glory of the nations into it.

This is the supreme vision which Christianity sets before mankind. The world can never go back to the individualistic faith of our fathers. No man to-day can be thoroughly and vitally a Christian who does not make the achievement of this perfect social order the supreme hope of his heart and the supreme end of his practical endeavor.

VI

THE CHRISTIAN HOPE

In all this discussion of the beliefs and ideals of Christianity, we have said almost nothing of certain matters which formed the staple of Christian preaching a generation ago.

I

Perhaps the greatest theologian America has produced, a saint, and one of the great preachers of the world, was Jonathan Edwards. His most famous sermon was entitled, "Sinners in the Hands of an angry God." In it he described men as suspended by a thread over the bottomless pit of eternal woe.

The note struck by Jonathan Edwards has formed so characteristic a part of Christian teaching that to many people Christianity means nothing else than the attempt to

frighten men into virtue by fear of hell fire. When Kipling desires to contrast the teaching of the gentle Buddha, and to urge upon Christians a broader charity toward their heathen brothers, he addresses them as

> "Ye who tread the Narrow Way,
> By Tophet-flare to Judgment Day."

Forty years ago one seldom heard a sermon, and certainly never an evangelistic appeal, which did not rest its case mainly upon the sinner's impending doom.

To many earnest and thoughtful people the loss of this sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin and the awfulness of God's wrath against it accounts for the spiritual flabbiness of modern life and the failure of the church to make any impression upon the world.

There can be no doubt, as we have already seen, that Christianity regards life as involving a genuine moral risk, or that it regards sin as involving utter spiritual disaster and death. It is doubtless true that the thought of our day is

extremely superficial at this point, and that the world is impatient of the stern warning which religion utters.

The changed emphasis in religious teaching, however, is not merely a weak concession to the spirit of the time. It is due in large part to factors in modern thought which are in reality the product of Christianity itself.

Chief of these is the recognition of the spiritual possibilities of human nature. Men have come to see that it is possible to transform bad men into good. Their attitude toward the criminal is no longer that of vengeance, but rather of desire for his reformation. Our penal institutions are becoming reformatories, and there is a growing conviction that in the heart of the worst man lie buried possibilities of goodness which need only to be quickened into life and given an opportunity for development to change the whole character of the man.

On the surface this attitude seems to involve a denial of one of the teachings of orthodoxy which has long been regarded as a corner-

stone of religious truth; namely, the depravity of human nature by reason of which the heart of man is inclined to evil and that continually, — on which account he deserves damnation and can be saved only by being born again and receiving a new nature in place of that which he inherited from our first father.

This doctrine in its traditional form was the product of devotion to the literal interpretation of the scriptures, and has largely given place in modern theology to a recognition of the weakness and imperfection of undeveloped humanity, by reason of which it is like a little child and needs the forbearance and wise guidance of parental love. The child may still be wilful and rebellious, and so cut himself off from the family life and from his Father's help. The change of attitude involved in his self-surrender to his Father brings about such a transformation in his spirit and life as may justly be called a new birth.

The new theology insists no less earnestly

than the old on the necessity for this changed attitude, and upon the grave peril of moral degeneration and death which is involved in the persistent attitude of wilful self-assertion. But the new theology takes the parable of the Prodigal Son rather than the Epistle to the Romans as the basis for its psychology of religion.

It is not always realized that the old theology made provision for quite as broad an interpretation of sin and regeneration through its doctrine of "prevenient grace." The sinner at all times was subject to such operation of the divine Spirit in his soul as made it possible for him at any time, by simply changing his attitude toward God, to come immediately into the relation of sonship and receive the regenerating influence of divine grace.

Translated into untechnical language, this meant that although there was in reality nothing good in ordinary human nature, the divine power was continually at work even in the hearts of bad men, supplying those

rudimentary impulses toward good which, if given free play, had power to transform the bad man into a good one.

Modern thought simply does away with the theological machinery which was the tribute paid to the literal interpretation of the New Testament, and says there are in the heart of the worst man good impulses which, if stimulated and developed, are capable of transforming him into a good man. All we have lost is a considerable amount of obscure theological reasoning, and we have gained a more frank and simple approach to the human soul.

This change in the theory of spiritual dynamics, coupled with a growing recognition of the reformatory rather than vengeful purpose of punitive measures, have largely displaced the appeal to the motive of fear in Christian preaching. Men have come to feel that there is not much moral value in refraining from sin simply for fear of punishment.

All that was really of value in the old way

of getting at things is preserved in the recognition that every act has its unescapable consequences, and that the evil and selfish impulses of human nature will lead to sure personal and social disaster if indulged.

II

The other principal element in the Christian preaching with which most of us were familiar in our childhood was the glowing and vivid description of Paradise. This also has been a favorite point of attack for the critics of the faith, who regard religion as an attempt to bribe men into virtue by promises of reward.

No doubt this motive has often been crudely employed in Christian preaching, and the world has happily outgrown it. We have come to see that there is little moral value in obedience which must be purchased by a gift.

It may be worth while, however, to stop just for a moment to note that there is a broad sense in which the hope of reward plays a large and legitimate part in all human

life. From the scholarships and medals and honorary degrees which are the prizes of scholarly attainment, to the vast profits which reward enterprise and foresight in the commercial realm, men pay universal tribute to this motive in their ordinary activities.

The kind of prizes which appeal most to men may differ widely in individual cases. As character is developed and the spiritual insight becomes more profound, the character of the desired reward becomes higher and purer. Doubtless, the true saint is he whose virtue is its own reward; that is to say, who finds in the consciousness of spiritual victory, and the approval of right-thinking souls, the enduring satisfaction which repays him for all of the sacrifices involved in the spiritual struggle.

But to deny the power of this motive to sustain men in the conflict, and to inspire them to look beyond the present moment to the future achievement, is simply to lose oneself in words and to refuse to face real life.

The real meaning of the promise of heaven which has played so large a part in Christian thought and life is the enthronement of hope in human experience; the assurance that in God's good time every human problem will be solved and every normal desire of human nature find its ultimate satisfaction.

Christianity is the religion of hope. It looks out upon a world which is confessedly imperfect and fragmentary, and refuses to believe it a finished world, done with and set aside.

It refuses equally to believe it an accidental world, a by-product of processes and forces which no one can understand and of which we know nothing.

It finds rather in the very imperfection of the world the promise of hope. It looks upon creation as a process. It anticipated by nineteen centuries the doctrine of evolution which declares all existence to be a progress toward some far-off end. It sees in every springtime the promise of harvest, in every seed the promise of growth, in every

flower the promise of fruit. It knows that childhood is imperfect, but sees the promise of childhood fulfilled in manhood.

So when it finds humanity imperfect, it dares to look forward to the dawn of a new day when the lessons of life shall have been learned, when the individual shall have attained to the full spiritual stature of the sons of God, and human society become the heavenly kingdom.

III

In the early church the Christian hope took the form of the anticipation of the speedy return of Christ to set up in person his kingdom in the earth.

Certain of Christ's own sayings seemed to promise such return, at least in the form in which they have come down to us. It is impossible to be certain whether Jesus himself said these things in this form, or whether by reason of the crude Messianic hopes which his disciples shared with the rest of the Jewish people they misapprehended what

he did say and reported him imperfectly; but there is no doubt that the New Testament writers shared the belief of their brethren that the generation then alive would witness the return of Christ and the setting up of his miraculous heavenly kingdom on earth.

There is equally no doubt that they were mistaken. The generation of the apostles fell on sleep and were gathered to their fathers. Nineteen centuries have passed away and history goes on in its accustomed way.

Nevertheless, the hope of the literal return of Christ to set up a miraculous kingdom on the earth has persisted. Men have comforted themselves with remembering that a thousand years are with the Lord as one day, and that the mistake of the early disciples as to the time does not of necessity vitiate the hope of his coming.

We have no desire to enter into the controversy over the return of Christ, but there are two or three things which must be said.

The first is that those interpreters of prophecy who find in the books of Daniel, Ezekiel and Revelations indications that these are the last times, or who regard the war in Europe as Armageddon, have had their predecessors in every age. The Beast has been Nero, Mohammed, Cæsar Borgia and Napoleon; the Scarlet Woman has been Islam, the Roman Church and Mrs. Eddy. The utter lack of any general agreement among the advocates of this point of view as to the interpretation of the prophecies renders the sober thinker somewhat skeptical regarding the whole religious conception involved.

If we will remember the principle which we have elsewhere found so fruitful in interpreting the sayings of Jesus, namely that he meant not what he said, but what he meant, we may discover that it is not necessary to take him literally in this connection.

He said, This generation shall not pass away until these promises be fulfilled. He said, There are some standing here who shall

not taste death until they shall see the kingdom of God come with power.

If we ignore the literal implication of these words and content ourselves with their spirit, we shall see that they were amply fulfilled in their own time and have received repeated and larger fulfilment throughout Christian history.

The little group of frightened disciples who fled from the mob in Gethsemane, or warmed themselves tremblingly at the fire in the outer court of the high priest's palace while their Master met his trial within, were utterly crushed by his crucifixion. Their hopes were destroyed, and they said sadly one to another, "We trusted that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel."

But something happened in Joseph's garden which turned their despair to wonder and hope and radiant joy. John and Peter found the tomb empty. Mary looked into the face of One whom she supposed to be the gardener, heard him say, Mary, and clasped his feet with the rapturous cry, Rabboni.

Doubting Thomas looked upon a form he thought never to see again, and put his finger into the print of the nails and his hand into the thrust of the spear, and wonderingly cried, My Lord and my God.

Waiving the debate as to the physical reality of these apparitions, or even the authenticity of the stories themselves, something happened to these men and women which turned them from a scattered group of crushed and disappointed mourners into a radiant band of death-defying enthusiasts who lived henceforth in the glad conviction that the kingdom of God was come with power.

Once more the little group gathered in an upper room in Jerusalem for prayer and praise, and to talk over the wonderful events of the past few weeks. They were still blind and ignorant as to the larger meaning of their Master's teaching. They had no conception of his spiritual power. But while they waited there came suddenly upon them a baptism of spiritual inspiration.

Again we waive the question as to the nature of this experience. Something happened on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem to that little band of Jewish peasants which made them a flaming fire and sent them forth to light the torch of spiritual enthusiasm throughout the Roman Empire. In less than twenty years men were saying in remote Greek cities, "They that turn the world upside down have come hither also." Within a generation Roman Emperors were consulting what to do to check the new movement. In less than three hundred years the gibbet on which a Jewish peasant met a malefactor's death became the proud standard of the Roman Empire, and the armies of the world marched under it with the slogan, "In This Sign, Conquer." Was not this a fulfilment of the promise of Jesus?

One other event of striking significance to the Jewish mind must be taken into account.

Remember that the Jew regarded himself as chosen of God; he believed implicitly in the miraculous history of the Old Testament.

He looked confidently for the day when Jerusalem should be the capital of the earth and the king of the House of David should give the law to the Roman Empire.

Is it any wonder that even to Jewish Christians the destruction of Jerusalem was the end of the world? It at least marked the end of a mighty epoch in the spiritual history of mankind. To us who look back upon it from the viewpoint of modern civilization, it was at worst nothing more significant than the destruction of Louvain. Nineveh and Babylon have disappeared. Alexandria was destroyed by the Caliph Omar. The fall of Jerusalem to us is only one of many similar catastrophes in human history. But to the devout Jew, even the Jewish Christian, it was a cataclysm even more overwhelming than it would be to a modern Englishman if the German army should lay England waste, and London on heaps, a smoking ruin, and of Westminster Abbey should leave not one stone upon another.

We do not insist that those commentators

are right who see in the destruction of Jerusalem the literal fulfilment of all the Apocalyptic prophecies of the Old and New Testaments; but to a vivid historical imagination it seems amply sufficient to meet the thought in the mind of Jesus when he foretold the destruction of the temple and the tribulation that was to come upon all flesh.

At all events, the most earnest believer in the impending advent of Christ would not insist that this doctrine is a part of essential Christianity, or deny the name Christian to one who finds in the recurring outbursts of spiritual power in human history the essential fulfilment of the Christian hope.

IV

The expectation of a Messianic Kingdom to be inaugurated by the spectacular return of Christ has been transformed in the Christian consciousness of our day into the hope of Christianizing the social order.

It is easy to see that such a hope would have been meaningless to the apostolic age.

The early church was recruited largely from the lower orders of society. To dream of exerting an influence upon the whole political structure of mankind so great as to transform its fundamental political theory and reconstruct the entire social and economic fabric was beyond the power of the human imagination in its wildest flights. The most which could be hoped for was to rescue as many as possible out of a doomed world, and to await the judgment of God to overthrow the ancient order of things and to create a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

It is otherwise with us who stand upon the pinnacle of nineteen centuries of historical development. We have seen the old order reconstructed not once or twice.

The Roman Empire which in the first century seemed as stable as the everlasting hills long since crumbled into dust. The ecclesiastical empire which was set up on its ruins to maintain the outlines of a social order amid the chaos of the barbarian inva-

sion has likewise long since disappeared. The institutions of feudalism which succeeded in turn gave place to the autocratic empires of France and Spain; and now at last we behold the whole world under the sway of democracy.

But when we look at this development we see that democracy itself is one of the fruits of Christianity; that it was implicit in the teaching of Jesus and Paul and that it is the leaven of the Christian evaluation of human nature which has been working throughout all the centuries to bring about this result.

In their dismay over the terrible catastrophe that has befallen the world men are telling us that Christianity has broken down and that the boasted progress of civilization is an illusion.

Yet this very war bears eloquent witness to the immeasurable influence which Christianity has exerted upon human ideals, when we consider the strenuous efforts made by all parties to the conflict to justify themselves

at the bar of the world's conscience. The very dismay which has fallen upon humanity, the feeling that this war is somehow a disgrace to mankind, the protest of all the peoples that it was forced upon them, and that they are fighting in self-defense against the unwarranted aggressions of their neighbors, tells of a new motive and a new spirit in human life.

A hundred years ago war was still an honorable profession and no nation would have dreamed of apologizing for being engaged in it. Not only has the world progressed by attempting to mitigate the severities of war, so that captives are no longer sold into slavery and the women and children of the conquered put to the edge of the sword; but war itself has become a horrible thing, a crime against humanity. Nothing could bear such powerful witness to the hold of the Prince of Peace upon the heart of the modern world.

The economic and social progress of mankind has been not less remarkable.

The majority of the inhabitants of the Roman Empire were slaves. Our writers on industrial problems indulge in much lurid rhetoric over wage-slavery and the condition of the poor; but one has only to read the economic history of even a few centuries ago to realize how vast has been the progress of social justice.

The recognition of the profound influence already exerted by Christianity upon human society has enlarged the Christian hope; and prophets to-day are dreaming, not of the return of Christ to destroy the world and set up a new and miraculous heavenly kingdom. They are dreaming of a world of righteousness and peace, of brotherhood, of mutual service; of a world where poverty shall be abolished, where every child shall be born into a heritage of physical comfort and intellectual opportunity; a world in which the ancient abuses of the social order shall have been done away and the whole level of humanity lifted to the plane of the Kingdom of God.

No doubt, this dream seems to many but

an idle tale. We do not expect its advent to-day or to-morrow. But we, too, may comfort our hearts with the reflection that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years. A mushroom will spring up in a night. If you are fortunate some October morning, you may see one push its way through the dead leaves and spring before your eyes to its full growth. But you cannot, by watching, trace the development of an acorn into an oak tree.

A baboon and a Hottentot baby may be born the same day in an African jungle, but the ape will be full-grown and the grandfather of a generation of apes before the baby has grown to maturity. We need not wonder that the Almighty takes many centuries for the development of humanity if He took a thousand ages to fit the earth for the habitation of man.

Christianity faces the future with an unconquerable faith, believing that every upward step in the history of mankind hitherto is the promise of that far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves.

V

Yet even this does not exhaust the Christian hope, for Christianity insists on interpreting life not only in terms of the whole race as an organic unit, growing through the centuries and learning its lessons until it shall attain ultimately the full stature of maturity, but equally in terms of the individual. It insists that every man is a child of the Infinite, and it refuses to measure his life and destiny by months and years.

This is the meaning of those visions of Paradise which cheered the hearts of our fathers. The hope of heaven is not a reward to bribe men into virtue; it is simply the declaration that their individual personal lives are not meaningless or fruitless; but that every longing and aspiration of the human soul is a promise of ultimate fruition, a draft upon the boundless resources of Almighty God.

The shortness of human life is, after all, the supreme tragedy of mankind. We start

out in youth with such lofty ideals, only to sink into the sad disillusionment of the middle years as we realize how far short we have fallen. We send forth our hearts in friendship and love, only to discover that chance and change are busy ever; that with the best will in the world our friendships are marred by human selfishness, are interrupted by the shifting scenes of our pilgrimage; that even the deepest and sweetest human affections do not fulfil their promise to our hearts; and death drops its curtain over all, sending us down the afternoon slope of life lonely and bereaved.

"The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Awaits alike th' inevitable hour:
The paths of glory lead but to the grave."

An immeasurable sadness has fallen upon the world in these last days through the eclipse of the immortal hope. Under the spell of the scientific method men have refused to believe anything which could not be demonstrated, and the contemplation of

that bourne whence no traveler returns has chilled and darkened their minds.

But Christianity refuses to be browbeaten by the tyranny of the material world. Basing its faith on its experience of the love of God, on the spiritual power of Jesus Christ — which certainly was not confined within the tomb in Joseph's garden, whatever men may think of his physical resurrection — Christianity faces the future with inextinguishable hope and joy.

The Christian belief in immortality does not rest on the evidence collected by the Society for Psychic Research, but on the veracity of God, on the trustworthiness of spiritual instincts, on the conviction that the Universe is not bankrupt.

Men no longer paint glowing pictures of heaven. Streets of gold and gates of pearl have become mere figures of speech. A harp and crown no longer figure in the hopes of saints. Nevertheless the Christian belief is as simple and direct to-day as it has ever been. It simply dares to believe that the

loftiest ideals and purest aspirations of men will be fulfilled, and that the love upon which death lays so rude a hand will blossom into a fairer and deeper joy when the day breaks and the shadows flee away.

"There shall never be one lost good! What was, shall
live as before;
The evil is null, is naught, is silence implying sound;
What was good, shall be good, with, for evil, so much
good more;
On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven, a perfect
round.

All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good, shall
exist;
Not its semblance, but itself; no beauty, nor good,
nor power
Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the
melodist
When eternity affirms the conception of an hour.
The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too
hard,
The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the
sky,
Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard;
Enough that he heard it once: we shall hear it
by-and-by."

— Browning, "Abt Vogler."

optimism; yet even so they indicate that the growth of the church has not kept pace with that of the population. The gain in church membership for 1914 in the United States was something more than three quarters of a million, or about two per cent; while the population increases something more than three per cent each year.

Two or three years ago 1600 churches in the state of Illinois were reported as having closed their doors in a single year. The problem of the rural community and of the small town rivals that of the city, where down-town churches by the thousand have been sold and turned into motion picture houses or garages while the church followed its more prosperous members uptown.

Mission boards in all denominations appeal ever more earnestly for support, yet most of them have during the past few years been compelled to face large deficits or cut down their work.

The total seating capacity of the churches in an average city would probably not accom-

modate a fourth of the population, yet not one church in twenty is filled to its capacity excepting on Easter Sunday or Christmas. The Sunday evening service has become the bugbear of ministers and an ever-increasing problem for the average church.

The motion picture show, the Sunday theatre and ball game, the automobile and the Sunday paper have been blamed for this state of affairs, but the condition itself is all but universally admitted.

There is a widespread feeling that this condition is due not so much to religious indifference as to the failure of the church to meet the spiritual needs of the time.

A brilliant professor in a leading University, in reply to a questionnaire regarding the attitude of University men to the church, replied, "A lover of religion will avoid all the churches, liberal and orthodox, as a lover of wine would avoid empty bottles." Perhaps this particular professor was more interested in making an epigram than in stating the exact truth, but there can be no

doubt that many essentially religious men both among the educated and the working classes are estranged from the church.

It is undoubtedly true that we must distinguish between Christianity and *churchianity*, and realize that the failure of the church to hold its own under the conditions of present-day life is not necessarily the failure of the Christian faith. But while this is true, the insistent demands of the historical church for recognition as the official custodian of spiritual truth no less than the equally emphatic insistence of her critics that she be cast out as a failure makes it necessary for us to consider earnestly the question of the real place of the church in human life, and her function in the religious training and development of mankind.

With our main contention hitherto I fancy the great majority of Christian teachers in all the churches would find themselves in substantial agreement. Doubtless many of them would place the emphasis in a different place at one point or another. Some may

feel that we have treated the authority of the New Testament somewhat cavalierly. Possibly many would regard the treatment of other important matters, such as the New Birth or Eternal Punishment, as hardly adequate.

But in the main the discussion thus far has dealt with the great fundamental convictions and ideals in which all Christendom, ancient and modern, agrees. If a few things which by some are regarded as essential have been set aside or inadequately stressed, it will doubtless be admitted that the matters herein set forth constitute the main factors of essential Christianity; and that any man whose life displays the influence of these ideals and convictions is entitled to be regarded as Christian.

When we come to speak of the church, however, the case is otherwise. There are two main conceptions of the place and function of the church in the spiritual history of mankind, and they are so essentially contradictory that it is impossible to find a

common denominator for them. One or the other must be definitely set aside.

In accordance, therefore, with the author's own deepest convictions he has chosen that view of the church which seems to him most clearly justified both in logic and experience. That in so doing he must part company with a very large part of the Christian world with whose principal beliefs and spiritual aims he finds himself otherwise in entire harmony is a matter of profound regret.

But if we are to find a complete and satisfactory answer to the question, What is a Christian? we must face the problem of the Christian organism. One can only be loyal to one's own convictions and set forth that interpretation of organized Christianity which seems to him to appeal most widely to the common sense of mankind and to be destined to fill the largest place in the social and spiritual history of the future.

Rudyard Kipling once wrote,

> "If England was what England seems,
> And not the England of our dreams;

But only putty, brass and paint,
How quick we'd chuck 'er, *but she aint!*"

Every patriot realizes the force of the lines.

No nation measures up to the ideals of its citizens. America seems to the casual observer to be made up of cheap politics, of superficial statesmanship, of graft and chicane, of incompetence and selfishness in public office, of greed and materialism in private life; yet this is not the America we love.

For the America of our dreams is the land of the free and the home of the brave. It stands for equal opportunity, for universal justice, for democracy, the government of the people, by the people and for the people. It is for the sake of these ideals which find such fragmentary and imperfect realization in our actual political history that we love the flag and stand ready to sacrifice our all for our country's good.

The same spirit ought in reality to be applied to the Christian church. If the church were what the church seems, and not the vision of our dreams; but only ecclesiastical

politics and millinery, and bigotry, and empty pharisaism,

"How quick we'd chuck 'er, *but she aint!*"

For the church is nothing after all but the attempt of the Christian ideal to embody itself in institutional form for the sake of perpetuating itself in the world, of implanting its ideals in the human heart, and stamping its impress upon human history.

That such an embodiment of a spiritual purpose should be a growing organism, forever imperfect and forever under the necessity of readjusting itself to the growing life of mankind, ought to be taken for granted.

To charge the mistakes and failures of the mediæval church to the account of Christianity is as unjust as to charge the existing chaos in the political conditions of Mexico to the account of democracy.

The nature of the church has been often misunderstood by its leaders themselves. Claims have been made in its behalf which cannot be justified at the bar of history. Mis-

takes and failures have marked her career from the beginning even until now, and doubtless will continue till the end of time.

But when all is said the church remains in essence and ideal the body which the spirit of Christ is forever fashioning for itself in the life of the world. It is the pillar and stay of the truth, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.

I

It is necessary to look for a moment at certain claims which have been made in behalf of the Church which seem to have been set aside by the experience of mankind.

The first is the claim to wield absolute authority.

The mediæval church claimed both intellectual and spiritual authority. It alone had power to declare religious truth, and to doubt its creed or dispute its interpretations of truth was a mortal sin. It claimed equally the right to declare the ultimate standards of

right and wrong, to punish the guilty, to grant indulgences, to forgive the penitent. To the Church had been committed the keys of heaven and hell; whatsoever she bound was bound in heaven, whatsoever she loosed was loosed in heaven.

This claim was apparently founded on the words of Jesus. But, as we have seen, these words are to be interpreted not by the grammar and the dictionary but by life itself; and the claim of the church must be justified at the bar of experience if it is to stand.

There can be no doubt that if spiritual life rests upon exact information, either as to theological truth or as to ethical demand, some final authority is necessary to declare that truth. President Patton of Princeton has defined Christianity as a piece of supernatural information, and declared this information to be contained in the Scriptures.

But inasmuch as there are some two or three hundred Christian sects each claiming to have the correct interpretation of the Scriptures, it is evident that nobody knows ex-

actly what that piece of supernatural information is, and there must be some court of final appeal.

The attempt of Protestantism to rest its case upon the authority of an infallible Bible has broken down completely, and there is no stopping place short of an infallible church; with power to declare not only what was true nineteen hundred years ago, but equally what that truth means in relation to the new conditions of the present time.

But the infallibility of the church equally breaks down, if for no other reason, because an infallibility which has to justify itself to the fallible reason of the individual before it can get its decrees accepted is practically useless.

As a matter of fact, as we have seen, Christianity is not a piece of supernatural information at all. It is a spiritual ideal which carries with it a spiritual interpretation of life and reality and which commends itself to the spiritual intuitions of humanity and stands or falls by its power to satisfy the needs of the human soul.

Such a faith has no need of an external authority. No infallibility whether of Pope or Bible can be of the slightest service to it, and the attempt to find such infallibility in church or book has been one of the most serious obstacles to the progress of the truth.

The notion of an infallible and authoritative church dies hard, but it has been definitely set aside by the experience of the last thousand years; and the future lies with that growing and flexible organization of spiritual impulses and ideals which shall most fully and freely represent the spirit of Jesus Christ.

The second is the sacerdotal interpretation of the church, its claim to be the sole depository of spiritual power and grace.

According to this point of view the sacraments of the church are not merely the outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual grace, but they are efficacious; that is to say, the performance of the rite at the hands of the authorized official of

the church is fraught with miraculous spiritual power.

In this case everything depends upon the legitimacy of the priesthood who exercise this power. It was committed at the beginning by Jesus to his apostles, and can only be possessed by those upon whom the hands of the apostolic succession have been laid.

This is the High Church ecclesiastical doctrine. Like the infallibility of the church it claims to rest upon the words of Jesus.

But the principles which we have found to be necessary for the understanding of his teaching throw doubt upon the doctrine at the outset, and the experience of history tends to confirm this doubt. If this view were correct, we should have a right to expect those communions which claim the apostolic succession to have a monopoly of spiritual power, a thing which the advocates of sacerdotalism in their wildest moments have not dared to assert. So far is this from being true that the greatest spiritual advance in Christian history has often been made

through those whom the sacerdotal party has refused to recognize as Christian at all.

Add to this the fact that sober history can find no trace of the apostolic succession, and the doctrine becomes one more of the never-ending succession of misapprehensions which have clogged the spiritual development of mankind.

II

Setting aside these excessive claims to authority and spiritual power which have wrought so much harm in religious history, and interpreting the church in the broadest sense as organized or institutional Christianity, we must further recognize the serious weaknesses and mistakes which have hindered its true mission.

The first is the tendency which the Christian church shares with every organization to become an end in itself rather than the means to a larger end.

Secular history bears abundant witness to this tendency. Political parties which were born in the enthusiasm of a great social

movement are forever degenerating into political machines, having no aim greater than to perpetuate their power and to distribute the spoils of office among their loyal henchmen.

It is not to be wondered at that this fate not only overtook the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages, and necessitated the Reformation in order to set free the spiritual life which was being dwarfed and cramped under the incrustations of ecclesiastical power; but that the Protestant churches which were born of the spiritual enthusiasm of the Reformation, or of great revival movements such as puritanism and the Wesleyan Revival, have fallen under the same condemnation.

Too often the ministers of the church have become mere ecclesiastics, contenting themselves with running the machinery of the church and building up its influence and power in the world, forgetful of the larger social and spiritual ends which were committed to its charge.

This peril is enhanced when the church

becomes too closely linked to the political life of the state, until it becomes merely another department of the political machinery. But even in free America the church has not been free from this fault.

The second failure of the church is its tendency to conservatism.

The more vital and important any truth in the life of men, the slower they are to change their method of interpretation. Religion is concerned with matters affecting the very destiny of the soul. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that in matters of religious opinion men should be more conservative than at any other point in their intellectual life.

This is not an unmixed evil. It has often served as a steadying force in the life of the world; and always it has this beneficent result, that it compels men to think their thought through, and to make sure that in their enthusiasm for new ways of thinking and in their endeavor to interpret new experiences and deeper knowledge they shall

not lose sight of the largest and most significant bearings of their thought upon the ethical and spiritual life of the race.

But when this healthy conservatism of humanity in matters pertaining to the spiritual life becomes a narrow and hide-bound bigotry, then the new wine of the spirit must burst the old bottles of dogma and creed.

The enormous advance in knowledge which has been afforded by the science of the last hundred years, and the new ethical and social problems which have resulted from industrial progress, have made necessary the re-statement of the whole body of Christian truth in the terms of present-day thought and life; and the time has come when the natural conservatism of the church must be cast aside in the spirit of an earnest and reverent eagerness to discover the larger meanings of the Christian message.

If the church fails to meet this situation, and endeavors to restrain the growing power of progressive thought, the increased pressure thus brought about is likely to result

in an explosion which might be disastrous to the ancient machine.

Once more, there can be no doubt that the church has failed to adjust itself to the new conditions of life which have resulted from the industrial and social revolution of the past century, and that in many ways it no longer ministers to the real needs of humanity.

In its reaction from the shallow worldliness of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries evangelical Christianity has tended to become narrowly pietistic; and to act as though men had no interests other than the spiritual and no duty in life except to prepare for death.

As a result it has left out of account all the varied and complex social needs of the world. It has ignored the world of culture. Its attitude toward amusements has been chiefly negative; and it has not infrequently laid the ban of its severe displeasure upon those who have endeavored to interpret its ethical teachings in the interest of social regeneration. The minister who interested himself

in the housing conditions of his people, or attacked the most glaring abuses of the industrial order, has been told to leave these things to the secular authorities and preach the simple gospel.

No thoughtful man can observe the signs of the times without realizing that the church must mend her ways at this point or be cast as rubbish to the void.

The spiritual interests of mankind are paramount, but they are intimately wrapped up with the normal interests of his daily life. Christianity is for the whole man or it is nothing at all. It must not only make him ready for heaven but it must bring a heaven upon earth.

It is the task of Christianity to-day not only to re-translate its spiritual message in terms which the common man can understand; but to attack the abuses of the social order; to proclaim in no uncertain fashion the ethical demands of Jesus in terms not of the thirteenth century nor of the eighteenth but of the twentieth; to elevate and purify the daily life of

the world in all its manifold and complex interests, not only industrial and commercial but educational.

It must even direct its attention to the social life, and foster such normal and wholesome opportunities for recreation and pleasure as shall minister to the largest well-being of mankind.

The church must enlarge her conception to make room for this work. She must adjust her machinery, or reconstruct it if need be, until it is fitted to minister to the actual needs of living men and women. Merely to condemn the modern world because it is too interested and absorbed in its own life to hear her call is futile. Her Master's method was to mingle with all men, to seek out human need wherever it was to be found; and he bade his church go out into the highways and hedges and bring the needy to his feast.

The final weakness of the church is to be found in the failings of church members.

It is useless to ignore the fact that the world

insists on judging the church member by a higher standard than that which it applies to the man in the street. This may be unfair; but it is human, and it cannot be escaped. If church members indulge in shady business transactions, in uncharitable and malicious gossip; if they fail to adapt their business methods to the demands of the social ideal; if they lower their daily life to the standards of the world about them, and fail to impress mankind with the grace and sweetness of their Master's spirit; the world sees and takes note, and the church must bear the burden of their unworthy lives.

Due allowance should be made for the fact that the man in the street sometimes hides himself behind the weaknesses of church members, and to that end often accuses them unjustly. But when all is said we must not fail to recognize the responsibility that rests upon the individual member of the church to bring his life into harmony with the ideals he professes, lest he stand convicted of a practical unfaith which not only imperils his

own moral character but becomes an almost insuperable obstacle in the path of the cause he represents.

III

But after every concession has been made to the critics of organized Christianity, it remains true that the world owes an immeasurable debt to the Christian Church as the custodian of its loftiest ethical ideals and the minister of spiritual progress. In spite of the fact that the church has frequently misapprehended her own nature and mission; that she has shared the limitations and failings of all human institutions; that her history has been marred by much that was out of harmony with her own ideals and so has weakened her influence and paralyzed her own most earnest efforts, the church remains the one institution in human life which has stood for God and righteousness, which has borne witness to the worth and dignity of human nature and the immeasurable significance of human destiny; the one organization which has its root in the purpose to

serve mankind, and whose influence in the main has been to inspire and uplift the human race.

In spite of the narrowness and bigotry of mediæval theology; in spite of the abuses of ecclesiasticism; in spite of the Crusades and the Inquisition, of worldly popes and unworthy priests, of paganism in worship and laxity in morals, the Christian church was sole custodian of spiritual light and life throughout the Middle Ages, and handed down the torch to the modern world.

And to-day, in spite of all her weakness and limitation, in spite of the sectarianism which divides her forces, in spite of the narrowness and bigotry of ecclesiastics and the timidity of religious leaders, in spite of theological conservatism and lack of aggressive leadership, of the mistakes of preachers and the weakness of church members, the church remains the one institution in the civilization of the world whose supreme aim it is to establish the Kingdom of God and to lift mankind out of its moral darkness and social degradation

into the light and joy of spiritual power and moral victory.

This world is so constituted that every human ideal necessarily seeks to embody itself in institutional form. It is impossible for great truths to hang suspended in the air or merely to exercise a vague and general influence upon public opinion.

Political truth creates political parties; intellectual truth founds schools and establishes professorships; economic truth organizes itself into industries and commercial bodies; social truth is forever forming institutions such as charity organization societies and peace conferences, in order that its ideals may have a local habitation and a name and may be brought to bear directly upon the organized life of the world.

To suppose that the great creative spiritual ideals of Christianity could be content to float in the air and to exert only a general influence upon civilization is to fail to apprehend the essential genius of humanity. As a shellfish secretes his shell from his own flesh

and the waters with which he is surrounded, so truth is forever secreting an organized body out of the world of men; and the body which Christian truth thus creates for itself is the Christian church.

It is the task of Christianity to teach men its lofty and inspiring conceptions of philosophical truth. It must train them in the practice of Christian virtues and the pursuit of its moral ideals.

Especially does it desire to implant these things in the hearts and lives of youth. If political democracy finds it desirable to establish public schools, to inculcate reverence for the flag and inspire patriotic devotion by national holidays and the teaching of national history, is it to be wondered at that Christianity seeks to gather the youth of the world into its institutional life in order that the plastic mind of childhood should be informed and directed by the loftiest ideals the heart of man has conceived?

It is the task of Christianity also to bear its message of hope to all who have fallen under

the power of moral evil; who through ignorance or wilfulness have become the victims of their own lower nature and whose lives are degraded and distorted thereby.

Christianity is a message of hope to all the derelicts which strew the banks of the stream of life. The evangel of moral regeneration and victory is to be proclaimed wherever human hearts are human, wherever there is sin and moral weakness and spiritual hunger. This work will not perform itself, but needs the backing and guidance of institutional life.

Added to this is the task of holding before the world the inspiring vision of the Christian ideal, of comforting men in their sorrow by the vision of the immortal hope, of keeping alight the fires of social enthusiasm and spiritual consecration on the altars of the world.

Surely no greater task was ever laid upon human hearts than this. Small wonder that men have forever fallen short of its demand, that their mistakes and failures have weakened their power and distorted their vision; so that from age to age the spirit of the Christian

faith has been compelled forever to seek new channels of expression, and one reformation after another has broken the crust of institutional conservatism and burst forth in a new flood of spiritual power beyond the limits which had been set by human ignorance and mistake.

Small wonder that in spite of everything the lofty vision of a church without spot or wrinkle, the bride of Christ, the body of which he is the head, the fulness of his divine life and power, should have held the imaginations of earnest men in all ages and should have power still to inspire them with the largest devotion and the most eager self-sacrifice.

When all is said the Christian church, like the England or the America of our dreams, is not the historic organization we have known; but the loftier and purer ideal of which the historic institution is the imperfect but forever growing embodiment.

The Christian church is not the Catholic nor the Lutheran nor the English church; not the Presbyterian, nor the Congregational-

ist, nor the Methodist. It is all of these, and it is more than all; for it is the ever-growing vision of the Christian ideal; forever purifying itself; forever becoming more deeply understood; forever challenging mankind to a deeper consecration to the service of its eternal purpose; and forever embodying itself in the institutional life of the world under forms which vary from age to age, which are confessedly imperfect and subject to all the limitations of the flesh, but which none the less are worthy of the deepest reverence and most earnest devotion of the lover of his kind, because when all is said they are attempts to express the loftiest visions and the worthiest ambitions of which humanity is capable.

In *The Servant in the House*, Manson, the butler, is a new incarnation of the Son of Man. He comes to bring to his brother, the clergyman, a new vision of the Christian hope, and to help him rebuild his church, which has fallen into disrepair. The crypt of the old church is so full of dead men's bones that the

life of the whole community has been poisoned, and men have ceased to find in the church the fountain of inspiration and life. Before the larger work can be accomplished it is necessary for the minister to call in his other brother, the drain-man, and get rid of all the dead foulness which is stifling and poisoning the life of the people. But it is also necessary to catch a vision of the real church which the Bishop of Humanity is undertaking to construct in the world. Of this true church, which has never yet been realized in human experience, but which is the dream and purpose of every lover of the Christian ideal, Manson says :

"I am afraid you may not consider it an altogether substantial concern. It has to be seen in a certain way, under certain conditions. Some people never see it at all. You must understand, this is no dead pile of stones and unmeaning timber. It is a living thing.

"When you enter it you hear a sound — a sound as of some mighty poem chanted. Listen long enough, and you will learn that it is made up of the beating of human hearts, of the nameless music of men's souls — that is, if you have ears. If you have eyes, you

will presently see the church itself — a looming mystery of many shapes and shadows, leaping sheer from floor to dome. The work of no ordinary builder!

"The pillars of it go up like the brawny trunks of heroes; the sweet human flesh of men and women is molded about its bulwarks strong, impregnable: the terrible spans and arches of it are the joined hands of comrades; and up in the heights and spaces there are inscribed the numberless musings of all the dreamers of the world. It is yet building — building and built upon. Sometimes the work goes forward in deep darkness: sometimes in blinding light: now beneath the burden of unutterable anguish: now to the tune of a great laughter and heroic shoutings like the cry of thunder. Sometimes, in the silence of the night-time, one may hear the tiny hammerings of the comrades at work up in the dome — the comrades that have climbed ahead."

To this church every man belongs who is moved in any measure by the Christian spirit, who founds his life in any degree upon the Christian philosophy, who strives however feebly toward the Christian ideal, whether or not his name be found on the church register.

That he ought also in virtue of this relation to the Church Invisible to join himself in practical devotion and service to some branch of the Christian organization is only a counsel of common sense.

In the present crisis in Europe, we of America, secure in our distance from the struggle, may indulge our sympathies with one side or the other according to our prejudices; but the loyal citizen of Germany or France has no such discretion. He must go to the front or prove traitor to the deepest obligations of his manhood. And when he goes to the front he must go not as a free lance, a *guerrilla*, obeying his own impulses and disregarding the plans of commander in chief; but he must enter the ranks of the organized army and become part of the machine.

The parable needs no exposition. If Christianity be in any sense true, if its ideals have any right to challenge the loyalty of humanity, then there can be no neutrals in the spiritual warfare of mankind. We may not compre-

hend the program of the Commander in Chief. We may not in all respects approve the tactics of the General Staff. We may criticize the field equipment, we may recognize the blunders of captains and corporals. But we have no right to refuse to enlist.

With all her limitations and mistakes the Christian Church is still the Army of Jesus Christ, on the firing line of the world's spiritual battle; and she claims the loyalty and devotion of every soldier of righteousness, until her armor of "gray, war-dinted steel" is exchanged for the robe and palm of victory, and the imperfections and weakness of the Church Militant have become the radiant perfection of the Church Triumphant which is without fault before the Throne of God.

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